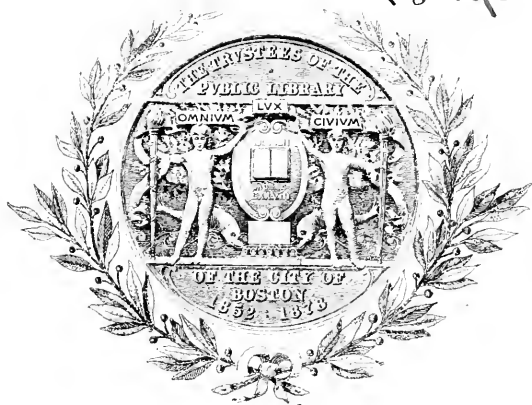




No 4357.2

1849-51



Assurance of Faith:

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SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE CONVENTION OF

THE CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS
OF MASSACHUSETTS,

IN BRATTLE STREET MEETING-HOUSE, BOSTON,

MAY 31, 1849.

By NEHEMIAH ADAMS,

PASTOR OF ESSEX STREET CHURCH, BOSTON.

BOSTON:
TAPPAN, WHITTEMORE & MASON.

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Mar 18, 1900

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THESE LINES
ARE TO
BE USED ONLY

S E R M O N.

II. TIM. I. 12. — For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

ASSURANCE of faith is justly expected of one whose professional business is to persuade men to believe. An ambassador is expected to be fully assured with regard to the nature and terms of his negotiation. It is as much to be expected of a minister of Christ that he shall feel sure of the way of salvation which he proposes to men, as that a pilot should be able to say to a ship-master in the offing, I am sure that I can take you to port. A guide who is uncertain as to the way, is no guide. A teacher who does not know assuredly that which he professes to teach, is so far an impostor.

A minister of Christ cannot be expected to speak with certainty of things in religion upon which revelation is silent. But he is justly expected to say what things are revealed to faith, and to inculcate them; there must be in his mind certain truths relating to God, and man, retribution, and the way to be saved; these truths must be as positively fixed in his mind as the rules of grammar and of numbers are in the belief of a school teacher. If there be any meaning in his name, ambassador for Christ,

there must be some things about which he is fully assured that they are essential to his own salvation and that of his hearers.

In answer to this, some will say, Men, and even ministers, differ with regard even to the fundamental truths of the gospel. If they are all fully assured of the doctrines they teach, some must be assured of things which are erroneous; for of two contradictory propositions, both cannot be true. Is it right, then, for any man to feel sure in his belief? What is there which is not disputed by able and apparently sincere men? In such circumstances, how can a man be expected to have assurance of faith? Is he justified in feeling sure that he is right?

The great business of ministers of the gospel, all acknowledge, is, to shew unto men the way of salvation. Whatever doubts a minister may have with regard to other things, so long as he holds his office he will, if he be an honest man, be sure that he is prescribing to men the way of salvation which God has appointed. Through constitutional infirmity of mind and excessive self-distrust, he may not, as a Christian, have assurance of faith, in the experimental sense of that expression, to as great a degree as others; but if he have a common degree of honesty, he will cease from being a Christian minister when he no longer feels assured that he understands the conditions of the gospel.

Assurance of faith, using the term faith in a doctrinal, rather than an experimental, sense, necessarily depends upon the clearness and certainty with which the way of salvation is revealed in Scripture. If the way of salvation be not fixed and clearly revealed, there can be no assurance of faith in preaching it; fundamental differences of opinion with regard to it are to be expected, and it is presumptuous for any man to feel assured that he is right.

My subject, then, is this: ASSURANCE OF FAITH IS WARRANTED BY THE CERTAINTY OF THE WAY OF SALVATION.

Is the way of salvation fixed and certain? I shall maintain the affirmative of this question. I remark, then,

I. IF THE WAY TO BE SAVED BE NOT FIXED AND CERTAIN, THE APPOINTMENT AND CONTINUANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IS PREPOSTEROUS.

The ascending Redeemer commissions his disciples in these words: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

If these men had no definite conceptions as to the way to be saved, it is easy to imagine what a figure they must have presented when they began to preach. That they should undertake to preach at all would be strange. The burden of their preaching would have been this, That nothing in religion is fixed and certain, except a few truths in natural theology, together with the immortality of the soul. The great Teacher has indeed scattered some principles like seeds given to the winds; time may develop them; but as yet, no man can assert any thing confidently in revealed religion, except that life and immortality are more clearly brought to light. Being asked how men are to be saved, what could they answer, if they had received no definite instructions on that point? They had received instructions, however, to this effect: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Being inquired of, What must we believe? of course they were prepared to teach certain truths, the belief of which was necessary to salvation. Unless this were so, and unless we as ministers now have, under the divine sanction, some fixed and certain way to be saved which we must preach to men, the establishment and the continuance of the Christian ministry is preposterous. The ministry may then be justly held up to the derision of the world as a profession without a science. Other professions have each a science. We, ministers, have nothing to minister but uncertainty, if there be no gospel. We are wandering Magi, for whom the star has never come and stood over the place where the young child is. If there be intrinsic uncertainty on the question, What must I do to

be saved, for eighteen centuries we have been in a long dream ; we are dreaming still, and when, alas ! shall we awake ?

II. IT IS REASONABLE TO SUPPOSE, IF THERE BE SALVATION FOR MEN, THAT THE WAY TO BE SAVED IS EXPLICITLY REVEALED.

Nothing is so important as the answer to the question, "How shall man be just with God ?" If God is willing to save sinners, and reveals a way in which they may be saved, we might expect that meridian brightness would be concentrated on that way of salvation. Obscurity, uncertainty, here, are like obscurity and uncertainty in charts and light-houses.

In important concerns we demand certainty. We require that logarithms for the navigator be worthy of perfect confidence, transferable into nautical calculations without a doubt in the mind of the seaman. Our fellow citizen who detected and removed an error in the *Mécanique Céleste* of La Place, established himself in the confidence of those who do business on the great waters. In the commercial world, uncertainty with regard to the policy of the government excites impatience and a panic. In the political world, we hear our fellow men calling out for something fixed and certain in the guarantee of their rights. The nations are demanding "written constitutions" at the point of the bayonet, — constitutions written in language plain and strong enough to make them feel safe in their vineyards and at their firesides, and to give them confidence at the Bourse. We may take the strong presumptive argument in favor of a revelation, viz. : It is to be supposed that a benevolent God would bestow a revelation upon man, and we may apply it here, saying, If God makes a revelation to man, it is to be supposed that He will make explicit disclosures of the way to be saved.

But further. Once being ascertained, that way to be saved must be so fixed and certain that it cannot be clouded by pretended revelations, human discoveries, or new interpretations. Schools of theology may not draw it into doubt ; acuteness must not be able to detect a fallacy in it ; improvements in literature

and science, in the arts and the refinements of life, must not demonstrate the need of some other way of salvation. Discontent and unbelief must spend their arrows upon it in despair. Opinions may fluctuate from age to age with regard to many things in theology, but the earth's orbit must not be more exact and permanent than the path of eternal life. The pastor of the church at Leyden, on their embarkation for this new world, may say with regard to many things in the system of revealed truth, and we may still echo his belief: I am "very confident the Lord has more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy Word." But, if he and his missionary band believe that, in all their discoveries and experience, they will find any new light on the question, What must I do to be saved? we must conclude they have not yet learned what be the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. In short, a man who proposes any thing new in answer to the question, What must I do to be saved? is as much a heretic as he who denies the existence of God. So momentous are the concerns of the soul, that if God provides salvation for men, we might expect that even the proofs of his own being would not be more fixed and certain than his revealed way of saving sinners.

III. FACTS PROVE THAT THE WAY TO BE SAVED IS REVEALED WITH CERTAINTY.

Wherever the Word of God has been received as the ultimate authority in religion, there has been such a concurrence of faith as regards the way to be saved as amounts to moral demonstration. It is as easy to learn the way of salvation from the writings of believers in all ages who have received the Bible as their supreme authority, as it is to learn the civil and literary history of those times. The truth on this subject, as well as on every other, has been by some perverted in every age, yet there has been a commonly received belief among the pious portion of mankind every where as to the way of salvation, and that belief has in all ages been the same. It has been held by Christians of different names, and of different persuasions as to many points in theology. Forms of baptism, modes of worship, disputes about

original sin, special grace, and other things in great numbers, have divided Christian believers into sects and parties, and their contentions have been sharp; yet upon the question, What must I do to be saved? they have had but one answer to give, and that without any double meaning, or doubtful sense.

Among the poor and pious members of Christian churches, there is, at the present day, the same concurrence of views and feelings as to the way of salvation. Now the surest test of essential scriptural truth is the way in which it is received by the disciples of Christ in the humbler walks of life. Neither theological seminaries nor the writings of learned men are so sure and safe a guide with regard to the essential truths of religion as the opinions of humble and pious believers.

They subject their faith to the test of experience, not living as the learned are liable to do, in the world of speculation; but they depend upon simple truth as the daily bread of their spiritual life. Let a man present himself in one of our pulpits, professing to preach the gospel; the impression which he makes upon the humble, godly men and women, is the safest test of his doctrine and spirit, whether they be evangelical. If he be unsound or wanting in experimental piety, they will say he does not reach their hearts. The Saviour selected this as one of the proofs by which his forerunner might know that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. If you sound a distinct note with your voice near a certain instrument of many strings, there are strings in that instrument which will own the sound, and respond to it. You will hear their soft responses, if your sound be gentle; or a loud and joyous answer, if such be the tone of your voice. So when a man, with his heart renewed by the Holy Ghost, speaks the truth as it is in Jesus, there are hidden sensibilities in the congregation, among the unlearned as well as the wise, which straightway respond in a thrill of approbation and pleasure. The gospel has made the larger part of its conquests among the humble poor, and, which is an equally noticeable and interesting fact, among the other sex. In the State Prison, man, in the

Christian Church, woman, holds the priority of numbers. She that was first in the transgression has retrieved her reputation at the sepulchre of her Redeemer ; and if that Saviour is absent from our preaching, the first complaint will come from a Mary Magdalene, or from some other Mary, saying, “ I know not where ye have laid him.” Ask woman what is the way to be saved ; woman, of every kindred and clime, where the grace of God has shed its influence ; woman, who thus far constitutes the majority of the redeemed in heaven. The answer, in its unity, and sweetness, and power, will be like that of the innumerable company of angels.

A powerful testimony with regard to the way of salvation is found in the history of dying beds. You have known every way of salvation renounced in its turn by one and another as they came to die, except that way of peace with God which the Christian world receives as the only way of salvation. Should we gather the votes of the dying, if all those emaciated hands could be lifted up in testimony on this subject, we know what the result would be. Has any member of this Convention, has any Christian pastor, ever been addressed by a parishioner in such language as this : ‘ You have taught me the way of salvation by Jesus Christ ; I have embraced it, but now I feel it to be insufficient in my dying hour ? ’ If there be any record or well-founded tradition of such a testimony, though in a single instance, we should be more concerned than when, as controversialists, we hear of an exhumed manuscript, or, as believers in the Old Testament chronology, are confronted with fossils older than Adam. The first Christian martyr seems to have given the tone note to the dying beds of believers since his day : — “ Lord Jesus receive my spirit.” That minister has reason to be happy who enjoys these two kinds of testimony, the one to his natural, and the other to his spiritual, character : First, that the children love him ; and Secondly, that the broken in spirit, and the dying place a high value on his presence with them. Has any one of us, as a minister of the Gospel, ever been rejected or superseded at a dying

bed? An ecclesiastical council might depose that man, but this should not be to him the occasion of so much solicitude for his spiritual condition, as that a poor, dying believer in his church should prefer some other pastor for spiritual counsel and succor. In that honest hour, when the soul is ready to appear before God, we frequently have striking verifications of those words respecting the way to be saved: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste."

IV. THE APOSTLES EXPLICITLY ASSERTED ONE, AND ONLY ONE, WAY OF SALVATION.

They witnessed the effects of the gospel when opposed by principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. They saw it enter Cæsar's household; barbarians also, and slaves were subjects of its power. If we examine the testimony of these apostles on the question, Whether there was, in their view, any uncertainty in the way to be saved? we hear them say: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again; If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." "Continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." When Paul had said to Timothy, in the text, "I know whom I have believed," he added, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Paul, in his great experience as a Christian and minister, had not found occasion, when he came to die, to change his belief; nor had he been so

affected with the diversity of views among religious teachers, nor by the preferences and idiosyncrasies of different minds as to feel that one thing is truth to one man, and another thing to another. As he resigns his ministry into the hands of Christ, this is the concluding word in his resignation : “ I have kept the faith.”

I proceed now to derive some practical inferences from the doctrine of this discourse.

1. *The opinions and preaching of a Christian minister should be characterized by definiteness and decision.*

Whoever may be uncertain in their professional knowledge, they who have in charge the ministry of reconciliation should be clear in their views, decided in the promulgation of them, and bold in their defence. The reasons are, that nothing can be more clear, nor be witnessed by a greater amount of cumulative evidence, than the gospel ; and, moreover, nothing which man can do is so important in its consequences as to preach the gospel. Here let us distinguish between questions in morals, theology, and interpretation of the Scriptures, not essential to salvation, and the substance of the gospel. There is a way to be saved. A minister may be uncertain with regard to many questions belonging to his profession ; but to that question, “ What must I do to be saved,” he must be as decided in his answer as it is possible in the nature of things for the human mind to be on any subject whatever. If he be not thus definite and decided, one of two things is certain : He either does not believe that there is danger of not being saved ; or, He has never felt the power of the gospel on his own heart. If he does not believe there is danger of not being saved, the wonder is why he should preach, unless it be to contend, as a hireling, with those who assert the contrary ; and if they should cease to preach, what would become of him ? Or if he has never felt the power of the gospel upon his own heart, why should he presume to enter upon the most sacred and important calling of an ambassador for Christ ? A decided, faithful application of the truth finds a defence for itself in the human

conscience ; while indecision and vagueness expose us to contempt. The gospel is not, like some sermons, an organ with only one stop, and that a flute-stop ; it has a sub-bass and a swell ; and we must not only “ play skilfully,” but sometimes “ with a loud noise.” There is a mutual adaptedness between the gospel and the human soul ; so that by manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

2. *The certainty of the gospel forbids us to be indulgent of error.*

It is inconsistent for a believer, and especially for a preacher, of such a gospel as that which we profess, to have that kind of sympathy for unbelievers and men in error however apparently sincere, as will lead him to say, Your faith is good and sufficient for you, and mine for me. We must be able to explain to them the conditions of salvation revealed in Scripture, to say that our personal hopes for eternity rest on the belief and acceptance of the gospel, and that we cannot encourage them to expect final safety in any other way. If we cannot say this, we do not believe that there is any fixed and certain gospel.

We are indulgent of error if we give the right hand of fellowship to men of all religious opinions. He that does it shews that he knows of no gospel, the belief of which is essential to salvation. Some men can worship with equal satisfaction in any meeting-house, mosque, cathedral, or respectable pagoda, seeking only for evidences of sincerity on the part of the worshippers. If Paul and such a man should meet in such a city as ancient Athens, they would not worship in the same place ; for such a man would say, I can tolerate any thing but the dogmatism which insists on one particular belief as essential to salvation. The most transcendently beautiful thing in all Athens in the eye of such a man would be the altar, “ to the unknown God ” ; — such an outgoing of the religious sentiment in man’s nature after the Absolute ; such a yearning in the children of nature after the pure and the true. Paul’s spirit, it seems, was stirred within him, among the Athenians, in a different way. He preached to them of the last

judgment, and of Christ, the final judge, because he had committed his own soul to Christ "against that day."

Yet there are some who insist, that we ought to be indulgent towards error, because, in opposition to the doctrine now maintained, they insist that there is nothing fixed and certain in religion, every thing being controverted, and private judgment, therefore, being the only possible standard of truth. In their view, some men are blessed with more faith than others, in the same way that some are blessed with better constitutions. They think that some are believers naturally, or by habit, or by education; that others, being less favored, believe less; but being sincere, are equally acceptable with God. The way to heaven, in the view of some men, is like the uncertain and billowy sea, over which the frigate, the steamer, the merchant-man, and the fanciful pleasure-yacht are passing; while here and there that little shell-fish, the nautilus, spreads its small sail and emulates the ships. Thus one man is strong in faith, while another has his little gospel, and is getting over the floods, perhaps, with less danger of being wrecked than the more pretending navigator, the great God looking upon him with equal complacency and acceptance; and now to disturb such a man in his limited faith, is represented to be as though the merchant-man should harpoon the little nautilus, or the frigate fire at him. I need not stop to say how contradictory to all such fancies are the plain, bold, awful representations of God's word, by the mouth of his apostles. The thought of such effeminate sentiments from the lips of an apostle does no less violence to our opinions and feelings with regard to him, than to think of Peter, for example, joining with the daughter of Herodias in her favorite amusement, or Paul and Silas singing with the choir in Diana's temple.

What a contrast in the intellectual tone and vigor of such writings as the Epistles, and of those books and sermons which plead for indifference in belief. To read the one is like walking in a forest where the voiceful oaks and pines remind you of the everlasting sea; while these effeminate and soft effusions of a

sickly charity are beds of poppies gone to seed ; their seminal principle is narcotic, and received too far is death.

One man who pleads for indulgence of error, will point you to the "one hundred thousand various readings" of Scripture, and remind you that every book of the Bible has been called in question in Germany. Indeed, it may, in his view, be said of the Bible, as Addison makes the heathen Cato say of a future state, that "shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it." Whether such a man is qualified to preach the gospel, or whether he has any gospel to preach, seems hardly to admit of a question. A just retribution upon such a man would be, that he be appointed to preach before this Convention from this text assigned to him by vote of the body: "I am set for the defence of the gospel." A greater number than usual would, on that occasion, probably leave the house before the collection is taken up.

What is that state of mind which leads a man to represent every thing in religion as doubtful ? How far is it from infidelity ? By what motive can a man be influenced who loves to dwell on the false assumption that Christians have always differed essentially with respect to fundamental truth ? Such a man may belong nominally to the most Orthodox denomination in Christendom, as some of this description claim that they do ; but his religious belief, there is reason to fear, is affected more by the publisher's advertisements in Halle and Berlin, than by his Bible and his closet. If some German free-thinker has a work in press, such a man thinks of it with great expectation, and on its arrival runs to see it almost as he would the Messiah. He is agitated after reading it, because that Gnostic has borne him still further from his soundings than he was before ; and with regard to his faith, he experiences a verification of our Saviour's threatening, "And from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

May the time come when our theologians will disdain to receive spiritual instruction from unregenerate men, or be dismayed at their speculations, whatever may be their scholarship. Of the wisest unconverted scholar it may be said, The least in the king-

dom of heaven is greater than he. There is more spiritual knowledge in Watts's Hymns for infant minds, than in all the writings of De Wette, Eichhorn, Paulus, Kuinoël, and Schleiermacher. Which of them has ever shed one ray of light on the greatest of all questions, What must I do to be saved? In ecclesiastical history, grammatical interpretation, geography, lexicography, and general grammar, we bow to the German scholars; but these are not the things by which, as the Scripture says, "men live." "Whether there be prophecies they shall fail, whether there be tongues they shall cease, whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away." While ignorance is not the mother of devotion, neither is learning. She is a handmaid to religion, not a mother. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And "he that believeth hath the witness in himself"; receiving external evidences through the understanding, but relying most of all upon that inward persuasion, and assurance of faith, which, as a rational man, he feels must not be contrary to reason, while it is above reason. It was by this persuasion that Paul sustained his afflicted spirit before the contempt of intellectual unbelievers: "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." In the prospect of death he could say with joy, "I have kept the faith." No man was less indulgent towards error than the apostle Paul; yet, for our instruction and admonition be it said, who ever loved his fellow men more devotedly than he?

3. *The terrible denunciations in the Bible against false teachers, warn us to be well assured of our faith.*

Nothing seems to move the anger of God more than false doctrine, and they who teach it. There are no words which pierce to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit in a minister, more than the words of God to Ezekiel, warning him against indecision and unfaithfulness in delivering the message of the Lord. "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel;

therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his iniquity, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hands." By the mouth of Jeremiah, God says, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture. Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord." Our Saviour never seems to have had his spirit stirred within him to indignation, except when speaking of false teachers. "Ye blind guides!" "Ye serpents! Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell! Fill ye up then, the measure of your iniquities." "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." We have already seen in what tones Paul denounces false teachers. Even the beloved disciple cries out against them: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." But the Epistle of Jude seems to be one flaming thunderbolt against false teachers. It would seem as though there must have been verbal inspiration in the case of Jude, at least, to suggest such words of accumulated wrath. "Ungodly men," "filthy dreamers," "brute beasts," "clouds without water," "trees whose fruit withereth," "without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots," "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

Then he summons up Enoch, the seventh from Adam, and makes him prophesy "against these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." He seems unwilling to cease from his invectives: "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own

lusts ; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."

Now the reason of all this is, that there is nothing in this world so important as divine truth ; for by this, instrumentally, with its sanctions, the souls of men are brought into allegiance to God. Truth, not force, is God's appointed instrument of governing the world. Hence, error is correspondingly dreadful, and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against it. Here, now, is one important test by which we may try the doctrines which we call the gospel, and which we preach. Do we, like the apostles, feel assured that we are right, and that those who essentially differ from us are essentially wrong? The Apostles felt so. Their love to the souls of men constrained them to say of some, "even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." In all their writings we find no weak indifference to error, no apology for infidels, but a constant asseveration of the truth, with warnings against those who pervert it. It is nothing to the purpose that bigots and persecutors feel that they are right and others wrong. This of itself, it is true, does not prove a man to be right ; yet he cannot be right without this. For an essential feature of the gospel is, that it makes those who believe in it feel and teach that it is essential to salvation. If a man says to us, I preach the gospel, we must require of him this proof, that he believes his gospel to be essential to our salvation, and he must proceed to warn us, if we reject it. Christ and his apostles do this. A minister must warn and threaten me, or he does not preach the gospel contained in Scripture. If we do not feel and teach that our faith is essential to salvation, and do not, therefore, preach against false doctrine and false teachers, it is a sign that we have felt but little, if any, of the power of the gospel. If the gospel which I preach be not essential to the salvation of others, it cannot save my soul. I am, then, a blind leader of the blind. If so, I may not perish alone. Some of my congregation may perish with me, and their blood will be required at my hand.

I turn from this train of thought to one more grateful to our

feelings, and will close by alluding to the example of assured faith in the words of the text: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Here is assurance of historical and experimental faith. Assurance of experimental faith necessarily implies assurance respecting the truth of the gospel. Our occupation as ministers affords the best of opportunities for both of these ; that is, to know the truth, and to enjoy its practical effects upon our own souls. A minister of the gospel ought to be a man of great faith, both as it regards his belief of the gospel, and his assurance of a personal interest in the Redeemer. If we feel the truth of one half the exhortations we address to others, we cannot fail to have assurance of faith in every sense of the word. Thus a Christian minister ought to be the happiest man on earth. He enjoys every means of knowing the truth, and of applying it to his own heart, and of profiting by the experience of others. His study, the sick-room, the house of mourning, the prayer-meeting, the pulpit, afford him the best advantages to be eminent in faith, and a partaker here in a large measure, of the glory which shall be revealed. If we believe all which we say to others, we, as ministers, of course expect to be exceedingly happy in heaven. We have had our minds and hearts cultivated, we are admitted to the very best society on earth, our thoughts and feelings are associated with things into which angels desire to look, we are laborers together with God, ministers of Christ, and "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." A distinguished fellow-servant of ours once said, "If we only felt what joys are laid up for us in heaven, we should clap our hands and say, I am a minister of Christ! I am a minister of Christ!" Let us only put in exercise that faith which we prescribe to our fellow-Christians, and then we shall not wonder at the assured faith of that great believer, Hugo, which he once expressed in such words as these: "I eat secure, I drink secure, I sleep secure, as though I had passed the day of death, avoided the day of judgment, and escaped the torments of hell-

fire. I play and laugh as though I were already triumphing in the kingdom of God." If there be covenant transactions between us and Christ, such as are implied in the text, if we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day, our hearts will respond as we hear Paul say, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." Soon, as an early Christian once said, "we shall see that adorable head which was crowned with thorns for us." Soon, very soon, from those hands which were nailed to the tree for us, we shall receive that crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give us in that day, and not to us only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

The occasion admonishes me to say, If, from that fulness of joy you should look back upon a desolate companion and your fatherless children, bereaved not only of you, but of their former means of support, may your heart be comforted with the thought that you bestowed upon some like them, who were tasting the bitter cup of sorrow, a token of your sympathy this day.

May it be the peculiar happiness of those who have known each other here as ministers, in joys and sorrows, in counsel or in controversy, to meet in heaven. Some will be there whom we may not expect to see, and some will fail whose absence will astonish us. May we meet there our beloved and venerable friend, whose presence and voice we miss to-day,* but who will always be pleasantly associated in our minds with this Convention. His face is a benediction; must it be changed into an admonition? That "reverend head must lie as low as ours." It constrains us each to ask himself, Am I a Christian? I am a minister of Christ. I was, or should have been, a Christian before I was a minister; and when at death I cease to be a minister, the great question with me will be, Am I a Christian? Do I know

* Rev. John Pierce, D. D., of Brookline, confined at home, as it is feared, with his last illness.

what the gospel is from my own experience ? Have I committed my soul to Christ, and is he keeping that precious trust for me against that day ? Then “take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine ; continue in them ; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” Amen.

50
THE THEOLOGY OF THE INTELLECT AND OF THE FEELINGS.

A

4057.2
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE CONVENTION OF

THE CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS

OF MASSACHUSETTS,

IN BRATTLE STREET MEETING-HOUSE, BOSTON,

MAY 30, 1850.

BY

EDWARDS A. PARK,

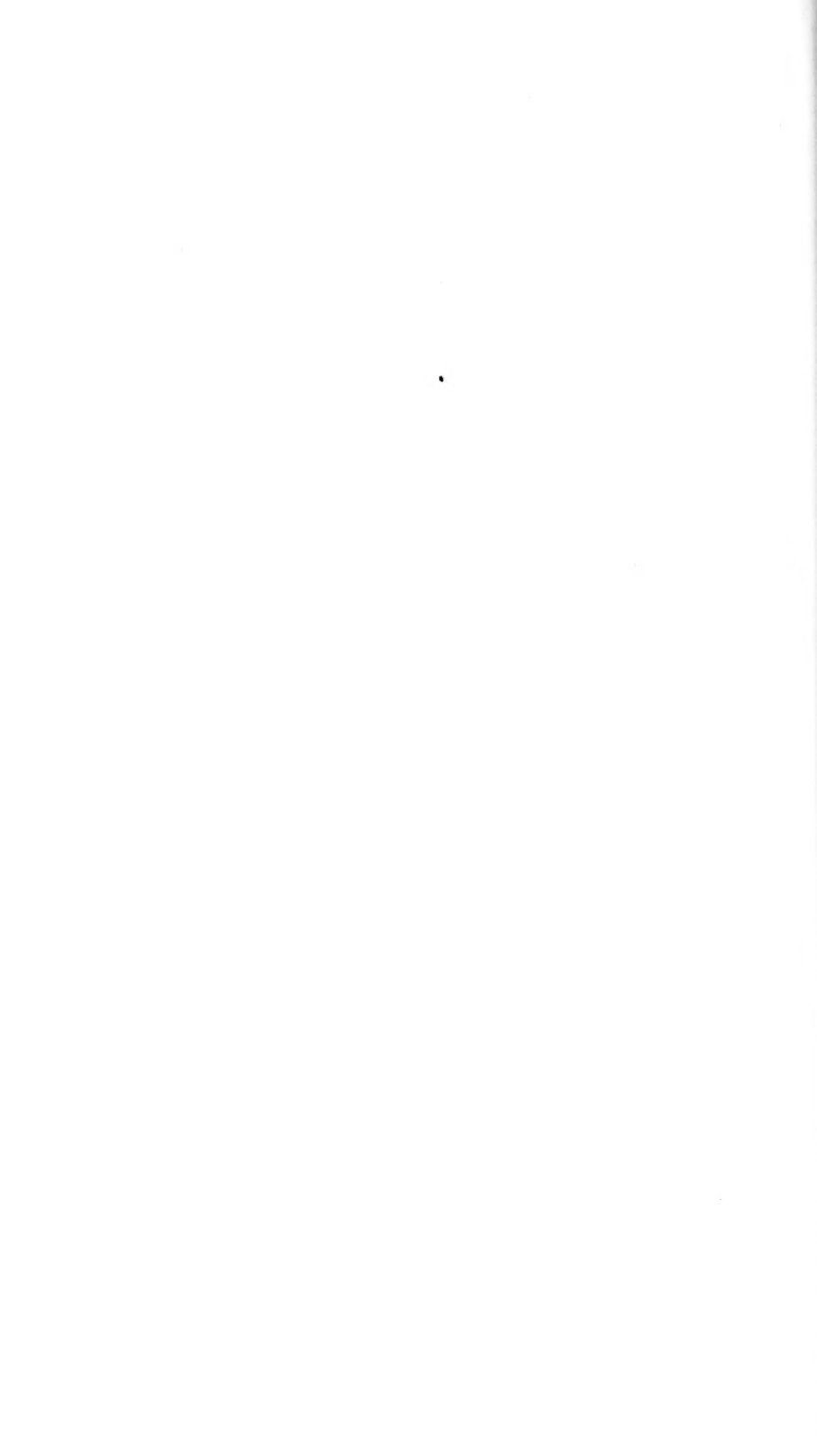
ABBOT PROFESSOR IN THE ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

Reprinted from the Bibliotheca Sacra for July, 1850.

BOSTON:
PERKINS & WHIPPLE.

ANDOVER: W. F. DRAPER.

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When the author began to prepare the ensuing discourse, he intended to avoid all trains of remark adverse to the doctrinal views of any party or school belonging to the Convention. But, contrary to his anticipations, he was led into a course of thought which he was aware that some clergymen of Massachusetts would not adopt as their own, and for the utterance of which he was obliged to rely on their liberal and generous feeling. Although it is in bad taste for a preacher on such an occasion, to take any undue advantage of the kindness of his hearers, yet perhaps it is not dishonorable for him, confiding in their proverbial charity, to venture on the free expression of thoughts which he cannot repress without an injurious constraint upon himself.

ANDOVER: J. D. FLAGG,
STEREOTYPER AND PRINTER.

DISCOURSE.

THE STRENGTH OF ISRAEL WILL NOT LIE NOR REPENT : FOR HE IS NOT A
MAN THAT HE SHOULD REPENT.—1 SAM. 15: 29.

AND IT REPENTED THE LORD THAT HE HAD MADE MAN ON THE EARTH,
AND IT GRIEVED HIM AT HIS HEART.—GEN. 6: 6.

I HAVE heard of a father who endeavored to teach his children a system of astronomy in precise philosophical language, and although he uttered nothing but the truth, they learned from him nothing but falsehood. I have also heard of a mother who, with a woman's tact, so exhibited the general features of astronomical science that although her statements were technically erroneous, they still made upon her children a better impression, and one more nearly right than would have been made by a more accurate style. For the same reason many a punctilious divine, preaching the exact truth in its scientific method, has actually imparted to the understanding of his hearers either no idea at all or a wrong one ; while many a pulpit orator, using words which tire the patience of a scholastic theologian, and which in their literal import are false, has yet lodged in the hearts of his people, the main substance of truth. John Foster says, that whenever a man prays aright he forgets the philosophy of prayer ; and in more guarded phrase we may say, that when men are deeply affected by any theme, they are apt to disturb some of its logical proportions, and when preachers aim to rouse the sympathies of a populace, they often give a brighter coloring or a bolder prominence to some lineaments of a doctrine than can be given to them in a well compacted science.

There are two forms of theology, of which the two passages in my text are selected as individual specimens, the one declaring that God never repents, the other that he does repent. For want of a better name these two forms may be termed, the theology of the intellect, and the theology of feeling. Sometimes, indeed, both the mind and the heart are suited by the same modes of thought, but often they require dissimilar methods, and the object of the present discourse is, to state some of the differences between the theology of the intellect and that of feeling, and also some of the influences which they exert upon each other.

What, then, are some of the differences between these two kinds of representation?

The theology of the intellect conforms to the laws, subserves the wants and secures the approval of our intuitive and deductive powers. It includes the decisions of the judgment, of the perceptive part of conscience and taste, indeed of all the faculties which are essential to the reasoning process. It is the theology of speculation, and therefore comprehends the truth just as it is, unmodified by excitements of feeling. It is received as accurate not in its spirit only, but in its letter also. Of course it demands evidence, either internal or extraneous, for all its propositions. These propositions, whether or not they be inferences from antecedent, are well fitted to be premises for subsequent trains of proof. This intellectual theology, therefore, prefers general to individual statements, the abstract to the concrete, the literal to the figurative. In the creed of a Trinitarian it affirms, that he who united in his person a human body, a human soul and a divine spirit, expired on the cross, but it does not originate the phrase that his soul expired, nor that "God the mighty Maker died." Its aim is not to be impressive, but intelligible and defensible. Hence it insists on the nice proportions of doctrine, and on preciseness both of thought and style. Its words are so exactly defined, its adjustments are so accurate, that no caviller can detect an ambiguous, mystical or incoherent sentence. It is, therefore, in entire harmony with itself, abhorring a contradiction as nature abhors a vacuum. Left to its own guidance, for example, it would never suggest the unqualified remark

that Christ has fully paid the debt of sinners, for it declares that this debt may justly be claimed from them; nor that he has suffered the whole punishment which they deserve, for it teaches that this punishment may still be righteously inflicted on themselves; nor that he has entirely satisfied the law, for it insists that the demands of the law are yet in force. If it should allow those as logical premises, it would also allow the salvation of all men as a logical inference, but it rejects this inference and accordingly, being self consistent, must reject those when viewed as literal premises.¹ It is adapted to the soul in her inquisitive moods, but fails to satisfy her craving for excitement. In order to express the definite idea that we are exposed to evil in consequence of Adam's sin, it does not employ the passionate phrase, "we are guilty of his sin." It searches for the proprieties of representation, for seemliness and decorum. It gives origin to no statements which require apology or essential modification; no metaphor, for example, so bold and so liable to disfigure our idea of the divine equity, as that Heaven imputes the crime of one man to millions of his descendants, and then imputes their myriad sins to him who was harmless and undefiled. As it avoids the dashes of an imaginative style, as it qualifies and subdues the remark which the passions would make still more intense, it seems dry, tame to the mass of men. It awakens but little interest in favor of its old arrangements; its new distinctions are easily introduced, to be as speedily forgotten. As we might infer, it is suited not for eloquent appeals, but for calm controversial treatises and bodies of divinity; not so well for the hymn-book as for the catechism; not so well for the liturgy as for the creed.

In some respects, but not in all, the theology of feeling differs from that of intellect. It is the form of belief which is suggested by, and adapted to the wants of the well-trained heart. It is embraced as involving the substance of truth, although, when literally interpreted, it may or may not be false. It studies not the exact proportions of doctrine, but gives especial prominence to those features of it which are and ought to be most grateful to the sensibilities. It insists not on dialectical argument, but receives whatever the healthy affections crave. It chooses particular rather than general statements; teach-

¹ See Note A. at the end of the Discourse.

ing, for example, the divine omnipotence by an individual instance of it; saying, not that God can do all things which are objects of power, but that He spake and it was done. It sacrifices abstract remarks to visible and tangible images; choosing the lovely phrase that 'the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Jehovah's wings,' rather than the logical one that his providence comprehendeth all events. It is satisfied with vague, indefinite representations. It is too buoyant, too earnest for a moral result, to compress itself into sharply-drawn angles. It is often the more forceful because of the looseness of its style, herein being the hiding of its power. It is sublime in its obscure picture of the Sovereign who maketh darkness his pavilion, dark waters and thick clouds of the sky. Instead of measuring the exact dimensions of a spirit, it says, "I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes; there was silence and I heard a voice;" and in the haziness of this vision lies its fitness to stir up the soul. Of course, the theology of feeling aims to be impressive, whether it be or not minutely accurate. Often it bursts away from dogmatic restraints, forces its passage through or over rules of logic, and presses forward to expend itself first and foremost in affecting the sensibilities. For this end, instead of being comprehensive, it is elastic; avoiding monotony it is ever pertinent to the occasion; it brings out into bold relief now one feature of a doctrine and then a different feature, and assumes as great a variety of shapes as the wants of the heart are various. In order to hold the Jews back from the foul, cruel vices of their neighbors, the Tyrian, Moabite, Ammonite, Egyptian, Philistine, Babylonian; in order to stop their indulgence in the degrading worship of Moloch, Dagon, Baal, Tammuz, they were plied with a stern theology, well fitted by its terrible denunciations to save them from the crime which was still more terrible. They were told of the jealousy and anger of the Lord, of his breastplate, helmet, bow, arrows, spear, sword, glittering sword, and raiment stained with blood. This fearful anthropomorphism stamped a truth upon their hearts; but when they needed a soothing influence, they were assured that "the Lord shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Thus

does the theology of feeling individualize the single parts of a doctrine ; and, so it can make them intense and impressive, it cares not to make them harmonious with each other. When it has one end in view, it represents Christians as united with their Lord ; now, they being branches and he the vine-stock ; again, they being members and he the body ; still again, they being the body and he the head ; and once more, they being the spouse and he the bridegroom. But it does not mean to have these endearing words metamorphosed into an intellectual theory of our oneness or identification with Christ ; for with another end in view it contradicts this theory, and teaches that he is distinct from us, even as separate as the sun or morning star from those who are gladdened by its beams ; the door or way from those who pass through or over it, the captain from his soldiers, the forerunner from the follower, the judge from those arrayed before him, the king from those who bow the knee to him. In order to make us feel the strength of God's aversion to sin, it declares that he has repented of having made our race, has been grieved at his heart for transgressors, weary of them, vexed with them. But it does not mean that these expressions which, as inflected by times and circumstances, impress a truth upon the soul, be stereotyped into the principle that Jehovah has ever parted with his infinite blessedness ; for in order to make us confide in his stability, it denies that he ever repents, and declares that he is without even the shadow of turning. It assumes these discordant forms, so as to meet the affections in their conflicting moods. Its aim is not to facilitate the inferences of logic, but to arrest attention, to grapple with the wayward desires, to satisfy the longings of the pious heart. And in order to reach all the hiding-places of emotion, it now and then strains a word to its utmost significance, even into a variance with some other phrase and a disproportion with the remaining parts of the system. We often hear that every great divine, like Jonathan Edwards, will contradict himself. If this be so, it is because he is a reasoner and something more ; because he is not a mere mathematician, but gives his feelings a full, an easy and a various play ; because he does not exhibit his faith always in the same form, straight like a needle, sharp-pointed and one-eyed.

The free theology of the feelings is ill fitted for didactic or contro-

versal treatises or doctrinal standards. Martin Luther, the church fathers, who used it so often, became thereby unsafe polemicists. Anything, everything, can be proved from them; for they were ever inditing sentences congenial with an excited heart, but false as expressions of deliberate opinion. But this emotive theology is adapted to the persuasive sermon, to the pleadings of the liturgy, to the songs of Zion. By no means can it be termed *mere* poetry, in the sense of a playful fiction. It is no play, but solemn earnestness. It is no mere fiction, but an outpouring of sentiments too deep, or too mellow, or too impetuous to be suited with the stiff language of the intellect. Neither can its words be called *merely* figurative, in the sense of arbitrary or unsubstantial. They are the earliest, and if one may use a comparison, the most natural utterances of a soul instinct with religious life. They are forms of language which circumscribe a substance of doctrine, a substance which, fashioned as it may be, the intellect grasps and holds fast; a substance which arrests the more attention and prolongs the deeper interest by the figures which bound it. This form of theology, then, is far from being fitly represented by the term *imaginative*, still farther by the term *fanciful*, and farther yet by the word *capricious*. It goes deeper; it is the theology both of and for our sensitive nature; of and for the normal emotion, affection, passion. It may be called poetry, however, if this word be used, as it should be, to include the constitutional developments of a heart moved to its depths by the truth. And as in its essence it is poetical, with this meaning of the epithet, so it avails itself of a poetic license, and indulges in a style of remark which for sober prose would be unbecoming, or even, when associated in certain ways, irreverent. All warm affection, be it love or hatred, overleaps at times the proprieties of a didactic style. Does not the Bible make this obvious? There are words in the Canticles and in the imprecatory Psalms, which are to be justified as the utterances of a feeling too pure, too unsuspecting, too earnest to guard itself against evil surmises. There are appearances of reasoning in the Bible, which the mere dialectician has denounced as puerile sophisms. But some of them may never have been intended for logical proof; they may have been designed for passionate appeals and figured into the shape of argument, not to convince the reason but to carry the heart by a strong assault, in a day

when the kingdom of heaven suffered violence and the violent took it by force. In one of his lofty flights of inspiration, the Psalmist cries, "Awake! why sleepest thou, oh Lord;" and Martin Luther, roused more than man is wont to be by this example, prayed at the Diet of Worms, in language which we fear to repeat, "Hearest thou not, my God; art thou dead?" And a favorite English minstrel sings of the "dying God," of the "sharp distress," the "sore complaints," of God, his "last groans," his "dying blood;" of his throne, also, as once a "burning throne," a "seat of dreadful wrath;" but now "sprinkled over" by "the rich drops" of blood "that calmed his frowning face." It is the very nature of a theology framed for enkindling the imagination and thereby inflaming the heart, to pour itself out, when a striking emergency calls for them, in words that burn; words that excite no congenial glow in technical students, viewing all truth in its dry light, and disdaining all figures which would offend the decorum of a philosophical or didactic style, but words which wake the deepest sympathies of quick-moving, wide-hearted, many-sided men, who look through a superficial impropriety and discern under it a truth which the nice language of prose is too frail to convey into the heart, and breaks down in the attempt.

Hence it is another criterion of this emotive theology that when once received, it is not easily discarded. The essence of it remains the same, while its forms are changed; and these forms, although varied to meet the varying exigencies of feeling, are not abandoned so as never to be restored; for the same exigencies appear and reappear from time to time, and therefore the same diversified representations are repeated again and again. Of the ancient philosophy the greater part is lost, the remnant is chiefly useful as an historical phenomenon. Not a single treatise, except the geometry of Euclid, continues to be used by the majority of students for its original purpose. But the poetry of those early days remains fresh as in the morning of its birth. It will always preserve its youthful glow, for it appeals not to any existing standard of mental acquisition, but to a broad and common nature which never becomes obsolete. So in the *theology* of reason, the progress of science has antiquated some, and will continue to modify other refinements; theory has chased theory into the shades; but the theology of the heart,

letting the minor accuracies go for the sake of holding strongly upon the substance of doctrine, need not always accommodate itself to scientific changes, but may often use its old statements, even if, when literally understood, they be incorrect, and it thus abides as permanent as are the main impressions of the truth. While the lines of speculation may be easily erased, those of emotion are furrowed into the soul, and can be smoothed away only by long-continued friction. What its abettors feel, they feel and cling to, and think they know, and even when vanquished they can argue still; or rather, as their sentiments do not come of reasoning, neither do they flee before it. Hence the permanent authority of certain tones of voice which express a certain class of feelings. Hence, too, the delicacy and the peril of any endeavor to improve the style of a hymn-book or liturgy, to amend one phrase in the common version of the Bible, or to rectify any theological terms, however inconvenient, which have once found their home in the affections of good men. The heart loves its old friends, and so much the more if they be lame and blind. Hence the fervid heat of a controversy when it is provoked by an assault upon the words, not the truths but the words, which have been embosomed in the love of the church. Hence the Pilgrim of Bunyan travels and sings from land to land, and will be, as he has been, welcome around the hearth-stone of every devout household from age to age; while Edwards on the Will and Cudworth on Immutable Morality, knock at many a good man's door, only to be turned away shaking the dust from off their feet.¹

Having considered some of the differences between the intellectual and the emotive theology, let us now glance, as was proposed, at some of the influences which one exerts on the other.

And *first*, the theology of the intellect illustrates and vivifies itself by that of feeling. As man is compounded of soul and body, and his inward sensibilities are expressed by his outward features, so his faith combines ideas logically accurate with conceptions merely illustrative and impressive. Our tendency to unite corporeal forms with mental views, may be a premonition that we are destined to exist hereafter in a union of two natures, one of them being spirit, and the other so ex-

¹ See Note B. at the end of the Discourse.

pressive of spirit as to be called a spiritual body. We lose the influence of literal truth upon the sensibilities, if we persevere in refusing it an appropriate image. We must add a body to the soul of a doctrine, whenever we would make it palpable and enlivening. It is brought, as it were, into our presence by its symbols, as a strong passion is exhibited to us by a gesture, as the idea of dignity is made almost visible in the Apollo Belvedere. A picture may, in itself, be superficial ; but it expresses the substantial reality. What though some of the representations which feeling demands be a mere exponent of the exact truth ; they are, *as it were*, that very truth. What though our conceptions be only the most expressive signs of the actual verity ; they are *as if* the actual verity itself. They are substantially accurate when not literally so ; moral truth, when not historical. The whole reality is at least *as good, as solid* as they represent it, and our most vivid idea of it is in their phases.

The whole doctrine, for example, of the spiritual world, is one that requires to be made tangible by an embodiment. We have an intellectual belief that a spirit has no shape, and occupies no space ; that a human soul, so soon as it is dismissed from the earth, receives more decisive tokens than had been previously given it of its Maker's complacency or displeasure, has a clearer knowledge of him, a larger love or a sterner hostility to him, a more delightful or a more painful experience of his control, and at a period yet to come will be conjoined with a body unlike the earthly one, yet having a kind of identity with it, and furnishing inlets for new and peculiar joys or woes. It is the judgment of some that the popular tract and the sermons of such men as Baxter and Whitefield ought to exhibit no other than this intellectual view of our future state. But such an intellectual view is too general to be embraced by the feelings. They are balked with the notion of a spaceless, formless existence, continuing between death and the resurrection. They regard the soul as turned out of being when despoiled of shape and extension. They represent the converted islander of the Atlantic as rising, when he leaves the earth, to the place where God sitteth upon his throne, and also the renewed islander of the Pacific as ascending, at death, from the world to the same prescribed spot. When pressed with the query, how two antipodes can both rise up, in oppo-

site directions, to one locality, they have nothing to reply. They are not careful to answer any objection, but only speak right on. They crave a reality for the soul, for its coming joys or woes, and will not be defrauded of this solid existence by any subtilized theory. So tame and cold is the common idea of an intangible, inaudible, invisible world, that few will aspire for the rewards, and many will imagine themselves able to endure the punishments which are thus rarified into the results of mere thought. Now a doctrine of the intellect need not, and should not empty itself of its substance in the view of men because it is too delicate for their gross apprehension. "God giveth" to this doctrine "a body as it hath pleased him," and it should avail itself of this corporeal manifestation for the sake of retaining its felt reality. If it let this scriptural body go, all is gone in the popular consciousness. It is not enough for the intellect to prove that at the resurrection a new nature will be incorporated with the soul, and will open avenues to new bliss or woe; it must vivify the conception of this mysterious nature and its mysterious experiences by the picture of a palm-branch, a harp, a robe, a crown, or of that visible engineering of death which, in the common view, gives a substance to the penalties of the law. Our demonstrable ideas of the judgment are so abstract, that they will seemingly evaporate unless we illustrate them by one individual day of the grand assize, by the particular questionings and answerings, the opened book, and other minute formalities of the court. The emotions of a delicate taste are, of course, not to be disregarded; but it is a canon of criticism — is it not? — that we should express all the truth which our hearers need, and express it in the words which they will most appropriately feel. The doctrine of the resurrection also seems often to vanish into thin air by an overscrupulous refinement of philosophical terminology. The intellect allows the belief that our future bodies will be identical with our present, just as really as it allows a belief that our present bodies are the same with those of our childhood, or that our bodies ever feel pleasure or pain, or that the grass is green or the sky blue, the fire warm or the ice cold, or that the sun rises or sets. The philosopher may reply, The sun does not rise nor set, the grass is not green nor the sky blue, the fire is not warm nor the ice cold, and our physical nature in itself is not sensitive. The man responds, They are so

for all that concerns me. The philosopher may affirm that our present bodies are not precisely identical with those of our childhood ; the man answers, They are so to all intents and purposes ; and when we practically abandon our belief in our physical sameness here, then we may modify our faith in our resumed physical identity at the resurrection. But while man remains *man* upon earth, he will not give up the forms of belief which he feels to be true. He must vivify his abstractions by images which quicken his faith ; and even if these images should lose their historical life, they shall have a resurrection in spiritual realities. Through our eternal existence, the biblical exhibitions of our future state will be found to have a deeper and deeper significance. They will be found to be literal truth itself, or else the best possible symbols by which that truth can be shadowed forth to men incapable of reaching either its height or its depth. In the Bible is a profound philosophy which no man has fully searched out. As this volume explains the essence of virtue by the particular commands of the law, the sinfulness of our race by incidents in the biography of Adam, the character of Jehovah by the historical examples of his love, and especially by portraying God manifest in the flesh ; so, with the intent of still further adapting truth to our dull apprehension, it condescends to step over and beyond the domain of literal history, and to use the imagination in exciting the soul to spiritual research ; it enrobes itself in fabrics woven from the material world, which seems as if it were formed for elucidating spiritual truth ; it incarnates all doctrine, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err, and that all *flesh* may see the salvation of God.¹

But the sensitive part of our nature not only quickens the percipient, by requiring and suggesting expressive illustrations, it also furnishes principles from which the reasoning faculty deduces important inferences. I therefore remark in the *second* place,

The theology of the intellect enlarges and improves that of the feelings, and is also enlarged and improved by it. The more extensive and accurate are our views of literal truth, so much the more numerous and salutary are the forms which it may assume for enlisting the affections. A system of doctrines logically drawn out, not only makes its

¹ See Note C. at the end of the Discourse.

own appeal to the heart, but also provides materials for the imagination so to clothe as to allure the otherwise dormant sensibility. The perceptive power looks right forward to the truth, (for this end was it made), from it turns to neither side for utilitarian purposes, but presses straight onward to its object; yet every doctrine which it discovers is in reality practical, calling forth some emotion, and this emotion animating the sensitive nature which is not diseased, deepening its love of knowledge, elevating and widening the religious system which is to satisfy it. Every new article of the good man's belief elicits love or hatred, and this love or hatred so modifies the train and phasis of his meditations, as to augment and improve the volume of his heart's theology.

It is a tendency of pietism to undervalue the human intellect for the sake of exalting the affections; as if sin had less to do with the feelings than with the intelligence; as if a deceived heart had never turned men aside; as if the reason had fallen deeper than the will. Rather has the will fallen *from* the intellectual powers, while they remain truer than any other to their office. It cannot be a *pious* act to underrate these powers, given as they were by him who made the soul in his image. Our speculative tendencies are original, legitimate parts of the constitution which it is irreverent to censure. We *must* speculate. We must define, distinguish, infer, arrange our inferences in a system. Our spiritual oneness, completeness, progress, require it. We lose our civilization, so far forth as we depreciate a philosophy truly so called. Our faith becomes a wild or weak sentimentalism if we despise logic. God has written upon our minds the ineffaceable law that they search after the truth, whatever, wherever it be, however arduous the toil for it, whithersoever it may lead. Let it come. Even if it should promise nothing to the utilitarian, there are yet within us the *mirabiles amores* to find it out. A sound heart is alive with this curiosity, and will not retain its health while its aspirations are rebuffed. It gives no unbroken peace to the man who thwarts his reasoning instincts; for amid all its conflicting demands, it is at times importunate for a reasonable belief. When it is furnished by an idle intellect, it loses its tone, becomes bigoted rather than inquisitive, and takes up with theological fancies which reduce it still lower. When it is fed by

an inquiring mind it is enlivened, and reaches out for an expanded faith. If the intellect of the church be repressed, that of the world will not be, and the schools will urge forward an unsanctified philosophy which good men will be too feeble to resist, and under the influence of which the emotions will be suited with forms of belief more and more unworthy, narrow, debasing.

But the theology of reason not only amends and amplifies that of the affections, it is also improved and enlarged by it. One tendency of rationalism is, to undervalue the heart for the sake of putting the crown upon the head. This is a good tendency when applied to those feelings which are wayward and deceptive, but an *irrational* one when applied to those which are unavoidable and therefore innocent, still more to those which are holy and therefore entitled to our reverence. Whenever a feeling is constitutional and cannot be expelled, whenever it is pious and cannot but be approved, then such of its impulses as are uniform, self-consistent and persevering are data on which the intellect may safely reason, and by means of which it may add new materials to its dogmatic system. Our instinctive feelings in favor of the truth, that all men in the future life will be judged, rewarded or punished by an all-wise lawgiver, are logical premises from which this truth is an inference regular in mood and figure. Every man, atheist even, has certain constitutional impulses to call on the name of some divinity; and these impulses give evidence that he ought to pray, just as the convolutions of a vine's tendrils and their reaching out to grasp the trellis, signify that in order to attain its full growth the vine must cling to a support. The wing or the web-foot of an animal is no more conclusive proof of its having been made with the design that it should fly or swim, than the instinctive cravings of the soul for a positive, an historical, a miraculously attested religion, with its Sabbaths and its ministry, are arguments that the soul was intended for the enjoyment of such a religion. If the Bible could be proved to be a myth, it would still be a divine myth; for a narrative so wonderfully fitted for penetrating through all the different avenues to the different sensibilities of the soul, must have a moral if not a literal truth. And so it appears to me, that the doctrines which concentrate in and around a vicarious atonement are so fitted to the appetences of a sanctified heart, as to

gain the favor of a logician, precisely as the coincidence of some geological or astronomical theories with the phenomena of the earth or sky, is a part of the syllogism which has these theories for its conclusion. Has man been created with irresistible instincts which impel him to believe in a falsehood? Or has the Christian been inspired with holy emotions which allure him to an essentially erroneous faith? Is God the author of confusion;—in his word revealing one doctrine and by his Spirit persuading his saints to reject it? If it be a fact, that the faithful of past ages, after having longed and sighed and wrestled and prayed for the truth as it is in Jesus, have at length found their aspirations rewarded by any one substance of belief, does not their unanimity indicate the correctness of their cherished faith, as the agreement of many witnesses presupposes the verity of the narration in which they coincide? In its minute philosophical forms, it may not be the truth for which they yearned, but in its central principles have they one and all been deceived? Then have they asked in tears for the food of the soul, and a prayer hearing Father has given them a stone for bread.

Decidedly as we resist the pretension that the church is infallible, there is one sense in which this pretension is well founded. Her metaphysicians as such are not free from error, nor her philologists, nor any of her scholars, nor her ministers, nor councils. She is not infallible in her bodies of divinity, nor her creeds, nor catechisms, nor any logical formulæ; but underneath all her intellectual refinements lies a broad substance of doctrine, around which the feelings of all renewed men cling ever and everywhere, into which they penetrate and take root, and this substance must be right, for it is precisely adjusted to the soul, and the soul was made for it.

These universal feelings provide us with a test for our own faith. Whenever we find, my brethren, that the words which we proclaim do not strike a responsive chord in the hearts of the choice men and women who look up to us for consolation, when they do not stir the depths of our own souls, reach down to our hidden wants, and evoke sensibilities which otherwise had lain buried under the cares of time; or when they make an abiding impression that the divine government is harsh, pitiless, insincere, oppressive, devoid of sympathy with our

most refined sentiments, reckless of even the most delicate emotion of the tenderest nature, then we may infer that we have left out of our theology some element which we should have inserted, or have brought into it some element which we should have discarded. *Somewhere it must be wrong.* If it leave the sensibilities torpid, it needs a larger infusion of those words which Christ defined by saying, they are spirit, they are life. If it merely charm the ear like a placid song, it is not the identical essence which is likened to the fire and the hammer. Our sensitive nature is sometimes a kind of instinct which anticipates many truths, incites the mind to search for them, intimates the process of the investigation, and remains unsatisfied, restive, so long as it is held back from the object toward which it gropes its way, even as a plant bends itself forward to the light and warmth of the sun.¹

But while the theology of reason derives aid from the impulses of emotion, it maintains its ascendancy over them. In all investigations for truth, the intellect must be the authoritative power, employing the sensibilities as indices of right doctrine, but surveying and superintending them from its commanding elevation. It may be roughly compared to the pilot of a ship, who intelligently directs and turns the rudder, although himself and the entire vessel are also turned by it. We are told that a wise man's eyes are in his head; now although they cannot say to the hand or the foot, we have no need of you, it is yet their prerogative to determine whither the hand or foot shall move. The intellectual theology will indeed reform itself by suggestions derived from the heart, for its law is to exclude every dogma which does not harmonize with the well-ordered sensibilities of the soul. It regards a want of concinnity in a system, as a token of some false principle. And as it will modify itself in order to avoid the error involved in a contradiction, so and for the same reason it has authority in the last resort to rectify the statements which are often congenial with excited emotion. I therefore remark in the *third* place,

The theology of the intellect explains that of feeling into an essential agreement with all the constitutional demands of the soul. It does this by collating the discordant representations which the heart allows, and eliciting the one self-consistent principle which underlies them.

¹ See Note D. at the end of the Discourse.

It places side by side the contradictory statements which receive, at different times, the sympathies of a spirit as it is moved by different impulses. It exposes the impossibility of believing all these statements, without qualifying some of them so as to prevent their subverting each other. In order to qualify them in the right way, it details their origin, reveals their intent, unfolds their influence, and by such means eliminates the principle in which they all agree for substance of doctrine. When this principle has been once detected and disengaged from its conflicting representations, it reacts upon them, explains, modifies, harmonizes their meaning. Thus are the mutually repellent forces set over against each other, so as to neutralize their opposition and to combine in producing one and the same movement.

Seizing strongly upon some elements of a comprehensive doctrine, the Bible paints the unrenewed heart as a stone needing to be exchanged for flesh; and again, not as a stone, but as flesh needing to be turned into spirit; and yet again, neither as a stone nor as flesh, but as a darkened spirit needing to be illumined with the light of knowledge. Taking a vigorous hold of yet other elements in the same doctrine, the Bible portrays this heart not as ignorant and needing to be enlightened, but as dead and needing to be made alive; and further, not as dead but as living and needing to die, to be crucified, and buried; and further still, not as in need of a resurrection or of a crucifixion, but of a new creation; and once more, as requiring neither to be slain, nor raised from death, nor created anew, but to be born again. For the sake of vividly describing other features of the same truth, the heart is exhibited as needing to be called or drawn to God, or to be enlarged or circumcised or purified or inscribed with a new law, or endued with new graces. And for the purpose of awakening interest in a distinct phase of this truth, all the preceding forms are inverted and man is summoned to make himself a new heart, or to give up his old one, or to become a little child, or to cleanse himself, or to unstop his deaf ears and hear, or to open his blinded eyes and see, or to awake from sleep, or rise from death. Literally understood, these expressions are dissonant from each other. Their dissonance adds to their emphasis. Their emphasis fastens our attention upon the principle in which they all agree. This principle is too vast to be vividly ut-

tered in a single formula, and therefore branches out into various parts, and the lively exhibition of one part contravenes an equally impressive statement of a different one. The intellect educes light from the collision of these repugnant phrases, and then modifies and reconciles them into the doctrine, that *the character of our race needs an essential transformation by an interposed influence from God*. But how soon would this doctrine lose its vivacity, if it were not revealed in these dissimilar forms, all jutting up like the hills of a landscape from a common substratum.

We may instance another set of the heart's phrases, which, instead of coalescing with each other in a dull sameness, engage our curiosity by their disagreement, and exercise the analytic power in unloosing and laying bare the one principle which forms their basis. Bowed down under the experience of his evil tendencies, which long years of painful resistance have not subdued, trembling before the ever recurring fascinations which have so often enticed him into crime, the man of God longs to abase himself, and exclaims without one modifying word: "I am too frail for my responsibilities, and have no power to do what is required of me." But in a brighter moment, admiring the exuberance of divine generosity, thankful for the large gifts which his munificent Father has lavished upon him, elevated with adoring views of the equitable One who never reaps where he has not sown, the same man of God offers his unqualified thanksgiving: "I know thee, that thou art *not* an hard master, exacting of me duties which I have no power to discharge, but thou attemperest thy law to my strength, and at no time imposest upon me a heavier burden than thou at that very time makest me able to bear." In a different mood, when this same man is thinking of the future, foreseeing his temptations to an easily besetting sin, shuddering at the danger of committing it, dreading the results of a proud reliance on his own virtue, he becomes importunate for aid from above, and pours out his entreaty, with not one abating clause: "I am nothing and less than nothing; I have no power to refrain from the sin which tempts me: help, Lord, help; for thou increasest strength to him who hath no might." But in still another mood, when the same man is thinking of the past, weeping over the fact that he has now indulged in the very crime which he

feared, resisting every inducement to apologize for it, blaming himself, himself alone, himself deeply for so ungrateful, unreasonable, inexcusable an act, he makes the unmitigated confession, with his hand upon his heart, he dares not qualify his acknowledgment: "I could have avoided that sin which I preferred to commit; woe is me, for I have not done as well as I might have done; if I had been as holy as I had power to be, then had I been perfect; and if I say I have been perfect, that shall prove me perverse." Thus when looking backward, the sensitive Christian insists upon his competency to perform an act, and fears that a denial of it would banish his penitence for transgression; but when looking forward, he insists upon his incompetency to perform the same act, and fears that a denial of this would weaken his feeling of dependence on God. Without a syllable of abatement, he now makes a profession, and then recalls it as thus unqualified, afterward reiterates his once recalled avowal, and again retracts what he had once and again repeated. It is the oscillating language of the emotions which, like the strings of an Æolian harp, vibrate in unison with the varying winds. It is nature in her childlike simplicity, that prompts the soul when swayed in opposing directions by dissimilar thoughts, to vent itself in these antagonistic phrases awakening the intenser interest by their very antagonism. What if they do, when unmodified, contradict each other? An impassioned heart recoils from a contradiction, no more than the war-horse of Job starts back from the battle-field.

The reason, however, being that circumspect power which looks before and after and to either side, does not allow that of these conflicting statements, each can be true save in a qualified sense. It therefore seeks out some principle which will combine these two extremes, as a magnet its opposite poles; some principle which will rectify one of these discrepant expressions by explaining it into an essential agreement with the other. And the principle, I think, which restores this harmony, is the comprehensive one, that man with no extraordinary aid from Divine grace is obstinate, undeviating, unrelenting, persevering, dogged, *fully set* in those wayward preferences which are an abuse of his freedom. His unvaried wrong choices imply a full, unremitted, natural power of choosing right. The emotive theology

therefore, when it affirms this power, is correct both in matter and style; but when it denies this power, it uses the language of emphasis, of impression, of intensity; it means the certainty of wrong preference by declaring the inability of right; and in its vivid use of *cannot* for *will not* is accurate in its substance though not in its form. Yet even here, it is no more at variance with the intellectual theology than with itself, and the discordance, being one of letter rather than of spirit, is removed by an explanation which makes the eloquent style of the feelings at one with the more definite style of the reason.¹

But I am asked, Do you not thus explain away the language of the emotions? No. The contradictoriness, the literal absurdity is explained out of it, but the language is not explained away; for even when dissonant with the precise truth, it has a significancy more profound than can be pressed home upon the heart by any exact definitions. Do you not make it a mere flourish of rhetoric? I am asked again. It is no flourish; it is the utterance that comes welling up from the depths of our moral nature, and is too earnest to wait for the niceties of logic. It is the breathing out of an emotion which will not stop for the accurate measurement of its words, but leaves them to be qualified by the good sense of men.

If, however, this language be not exactly true, I am further asked, how can it move the heart? We are so made as to be moved by it. It is an ultimate law of our being, that a vivid conception affects us by inspiring a momentary belief in the thing which is conceived. But, the objector continues, can the soul be favorably influenced by that which it regards as hyperbolic? Hyperbolic! What is hyperbolic? Who calls this language an exaggeration of the truth? If interpreted by the letter, it does indeed transcend the proper bounds; but if interpreted as it is meant, as it is felt, it falls far short of them. To the eye of a child the moon's image in the diorama may appear larger than the real moon in the heavens, but not to the mind of a philosopher. The literal doctrines of theology are too vast for complete expression by man, and our intensest words are but a distant approximation to that language, which forms the new song that the

¹ See Note E. at the end of the Discourse.

redeemed in heaven sing ; language which is unutterable in this infantile state of our being, and in comparison with which our so-called extravagances are but feeble and tame diminutives.

Astronomers have recommended, that in order to feel the grandeur of the stellar system we mentally reduce the scale on which it is made ; that we imagine our earth to be only a mile in diameter, and the other globes to be proportionally lessened in their size and in their distances from each other ; for the real greatness of the heavens discourages our very attempt to impress our hearts by them, and we are the more affected by sometimes narrowing our conceptions of what we cannot at the best comprehend. On the same principle, Christian moralists have advised us not always to dilate our minds in reaching after the extreme boundaries of a doctrine, but often to draw in our contemplations, to lower the doctrine for a time, to bring our intellect down in order to discern the practical truth more clearly, to humble our views in order that they may be at last exalted, to stoop low in order to pick up the keys of knowledge ;—and is this a way of exaggerating the truth ? *We do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God*, if we imagine that when for example he says, the enemies that touch his saints “touch the apple of his eye,” and “he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far and will hiss unto them from the ends of the earth,” he uses a mere hyperbole. No. Such anthropopathical words are the most expressive which the debilitated heart of his oriental people would appreciate, but they fail of making a full disclosure, they are only the foreshadowings of the truths which lie behind them. These refined, spiritual truths, the intellect goes round about and surveys, but is too faint for graphically delineating, and it gives up the attempt to the imagination, and this many-sided faculty multiplies symbol after symbol, bringing one image for one feature, and another image for another feature, and hovers over the feeble emotions of the heart, and strives to win them out from their dull repose, even as ‘the eagle stirreth up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, and spreadeth abroad her wings, and taketh up her little ones, and beareth them on her out-stretched pinions.’ Into more susceptible natures than ours the literal verities of God will penetrate far deeper than, even when shaped in their most pungent forms, they

will pierce into our obdurate hearts. So lethargic are we, that we often yield no answering sensibilities to intellectual statements of doctrine ; so weak are we, that such passionate appeals as are best accommodated to our phlegmatic temper are after all no more than dilutions of the truth, as "seen of angels ;" and still so fond are we of harmony with ourselves, that we must explain these diluted representations into unison with the intellectual statements which, however unimpressive, are yet the most authoritative.¹

We are now prepared for our *fourth* remark,— the theology of the intellect and that of feeling tend to keep each other within the sphere for which they were respectively designed, and in which they are fitted to improve the character. Both of them have precisely the same sphere with regard to many truths, but not with regard to all. When an intellectual statement is transferred to the province of emotion, it often appears chilling, lifeless ; and when a passionate phrase is transferred to the dogmatic province, it often appears grotesque, unintelligible, absurd. Many expressions of sentiment are *what* they ought to be, if kept *where* they ought to be ; but a narrow creed *displaces* and thus spoils them. It often becomes licentious or barbarous, by stiffening into prosaic statements the free descriptions which the Bible gives of the kindliness or the wrath of God. The very same words are allowed in one relation, but condemned in a different one, because in the former they do, but in the latter do not harmonize with the sensibilities which are at the time predominant. When we are enthusiastic in extolling the generosity of divine love, we feel no need of modifying our proclamation that God desires all men to be saved, and in these uninquisitive moods we have no patience with the query which occupies our more studious hours, "whether he desire this good all things, or only itself considered." Often, though not in every instance, the solid philosophy of doctrine, descending into an exhortation, makes it cumbrous and heavy ; and as often the passionate forms of appeal, when they claim to be literal truth, embarrass the intellect until they are repelled by it into the circle distinctively allotted them.

At the time when the words were uttered, there could not be a more melting address than, "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your

¹ See Note F. at the end of the Discourse.

feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet;" but when this touching sentiment is interpreted as a legal exaction, an argument for a Moravian or Romish ceremony, its poetic elegance is petrified into a prosaic blunder. There are moments in the stillness of our communion service, when we feel that our Lord is with us, when the bread and the wine so enliven our conceptions of his body and blood as, according to the law of vivid conception, to bring them into our ideal presence, and to make us *demand* the saying, as more pertinent and fit than any other, 'This is my body, this is my blood.' But no sooner are these phrases transmuted from hearty utterances into intellectual judgments, than they merge their beautiful rhetoric into an absurd logic, and are at once repulsed by a sound mind into their pristine sphere. So there is a depth of significance which our superficial powers do not fathom, in the lamentation : " Behold ! I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This will always remain the passage for the outflow of his grief, whose fountains of penitence are broken up. The channel is worn too deep into the affections to be easily changed. Let the schools reason about it just as, and as long as they please. Let them condemn it as indecorous, or false, or absurd, and the man who utters it as unreasonable, fanatical, bigoted. Let them challenge him for his meaning, and insist with the rigidity of the judge of Shylock, that he weigh out the import of every word, every syllable, no more, no less : — they do not move him one hair's breadth. He stands where he stood before, and where he will stand until disenthralled from the body. " My meaning," he says, " is exact enough for me, too exact for my repose of conscience ; and I care just now for no proof clearer than this : ' Behold ! I *was* shapen in iniquity, and in sin *did* my mother conceive me.' Here, on my heart the burden lies, and I *feel* that I am vile, a man of unclean lips, and dwell amid a people of unclean lips, and I went astray as soon as I was born, and am of a perverse, rebellious race, and there is a tide swelling within me and around me, and moving me on to actual transgression, and it is stayed by none of my unaided efforts, and all its billows roll over me, and I am so troubled that I cannot speak ; and I am not content with merely saying that I am a transgressor ; I long to heap infinite upon infinite, and crowd together all forms of self-reproach, for I am clad in sin as with a garment, I devour it as a sweet morsel, I

breathe it, I live it, I *am* sin. My hands are stained with it, my feet are swift in it, all my bones are out of joint with it, my whole body is of tainted origin, and of death in its influence and end; and here is my definition and here is my proof, and, definition or no definition, proof or no proof, here I plant myself, and here I stay, for this is my feeling, and it comes up from the depths of an overflowing heart: *'Behold! I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.'*"

— But when a theorist seizes at such living words as these, and puts them into his vice, and straightens or crooks them into the dogma, that man is blamable before he chooses to do wrong; deserving of punishment for the involuntary nature which he has never consented to gratify; really sinful before he actually sins, then the language of emotion, forced from its right place and treated as if it were a part of a nicely measured syllogism, hampers and confuses his reasonings, until it is given back to the use for which it was first intended, and from which it never ought to have been diverted.¹ When men thus lose their sensitiveness to the discriminations between the style of judgment and that of feeling, and when they force the latter into the province of the former, they become prone to undervalue the conscience, and to be afraid of philosophy, and to shudder at the axioms of common sense, and to divorce faith from reason, and to rely on *church government* rather than on fraternal discussion.

It is this crossing of one kind of theology into the province of another kind differing from the first mainly in fashion and *contour*, which mars either the eloquence or else the doctrine of the pulpit. The massive speculations of the metaphysician sink down into his expressions of feeling and make him appear cold-hearted, while the enthusiasm of the impulsive divine ascends and effervesces into his reasonings and causes him both to *appear*, and to *be*, what our Saxon idiom so reprovingly styles him, hot-headed. There are intellectual critics ready to exclude from our psalms and hymns all such stanzas as are not accurate expressions of dogmatic truth. Forgetting that the effort at precision often mars the freeness of song, they would condemn the simple-hearted bard to joint his metaphors into a syllogism, and to sing as a logician tries to sing. In the same spirit, they would expurgate the

¹ See Note G. at the end of the Discourse.

Paradise Lost of all phrases which are not in keeping with our chemical or geological discoveries. But it is against the laws of our sensitive nature to square the effusions of poesy by the scales, compasses and plumb-lines of the intellect. The imagination is not to be used as a dray horse for carrying the lumber of the schools through the gardens of the Muses. There are also poetical critics who imagine that the childlike breathings of our psalmody are the exact measures, the literal exponents of truth, and that every doctrine is false which cannot be transported with its present bodily shape into a sacred lyric. But this is as shallow an idea of theology as it is a mechanical, spiritless, vapid conception of poetry. If this be true, then my real belief is, that 'God came from Teman and the Holy One from Mount Paran; that he did ride upon his horses and chariots of salvation; the mountains saw him and they trembled; the sun and the moon stood still; at the light of his arrows they went and the shining of his glittering spear; he did march through the land in indignation, he did thresh the heathen in anger.' And if this be the language of a creed, then not only is the suggestion of Dr. Arnold¹ a right one, that 'in public worship a symbol of faith should be used as a triumphal hymn of thanksgiving, and be chanted rather than read,' but such is the original and proper use of such a symbol at all times. And if this be true, then I shall not demur at phrases in a Confession of Faith, over which, in my deliberate perusal, I stagger and am at my wit's end. Wrap me in mediæval robes; place me under the wide-spreading arches of a cathedral; let the tide of melody from the organ float along the columns that branch out like the trees of the forest over my head; then bring to me a creed written in illuminated letters, its history redolent of venerable associations, its words fragrant with the devotion of my fathers, who lived and died familiar with them; its syllables all of solemn and goodly sound, and bid me cantilate its phrases to the inspired notes of minstrelsy, my eye in a fine phrensy rolling, and I ask no questions for conscience' sake. I am ready to believe what is placed before me. I look beyond the antique words, to the spirit of some great truth that lingers somewhere around them; and in this nebulous view, I believe the creed *with my heart*. I may be even so

¹ Life, p. 102, First Am. Ed.

rapt in enthusiasm as to believe it because it asserts what is impossible. Ask me not to prove it, — I am in no mood for proof. Try not to reason me out of it, — reasoning does me no good. Call not for my precise meaning, — I have not viewed it in that light. I have not taken the creed so much as the creed has taken me, and carried me away in my feelings to mingle with the piety of by-gone generations. — But can it be that this is the only, or the primitive, or the right idea of a symbol of faith? For *this* have logicians exhausted their subtleties, and martyrs yielded up the ghost, disputing and dying for a song? No. A creed, if true to its original end, should be in sober prose, should be understood as it means, and should mean what it says, should be drawn out with a discriminating, balancing judgment, so as to need no allowance for its freedom, no abatement of its force, and should not be expressed in antiquated terms lest men regard its spirit as likewise obsolete. It belongs to the province of the analyzing, comparing, reasoning intellect; and if it leave this province for the sake of intermingling the phrases of an impassioned heart, it confuses the soul, it awakens the fancy and the feelings to disturb the judgment, it sets a believer at variance with himself by perplexing his reason with metaphors and his imagination with logic; it raises feuds in the church by crossing the temperaments of men, and taxing one party to demonstrate similes, another to feel inspired by abstractions. Hence the logomachy which has always characterized the defence of such creeds. The intellect, no less than the heart, being out of its element, wanders through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. Men are thus made uneasy with themselves and therefore acrimonious against each other; the imaginative zealot does not apprehend the philosophical explanation, and the philosopher does not sympathize with the imaginative style of the symbol; and as they misunderstand each other, they feel their weakness, and “to be weak is miserable,” and misery not only loves but also makes company, and thus they sink their controversy into a contention and their dispute into a quarrel; nor will they ever find peace until they confine their intellect to its rightful sphere and understand it according to what it says, and their feeling to *its* province and interpret its language according to what it means, rendering unto poetry the things that are designed for poetry, and unto prose what belongs to prose.

The last clause of our fourth proposition is, that the theology of intellect and that of feeling tend to keep each other within the sphere in which they are fitted to improve the character.¹ So far as any statement is hurtful, it parts with one sign of its truth. In itself or in its relations it must be inaccurate, whenever it is not congenial with the feelings awakened by the Divine Spirit. The practical utility, then, of any theological representations is one criterion of their propriety. Judged by this test, many fashionable forms of statement will sooner or later be condemned. Half of the truth is often a falsehood as it is impressed on the feelings; not always, however, for sometimes it has the good, the right influence, and is craved by the sensibilities which can bear no more. The heart of man is contracted, therefore loves individual views, dreads the labor of that long-continued expansion which is needed for embracing the comprehensive system. Hence its individualizing processes must be superintended by the judgment and conscience, which forbid that the attention be absorbed by any one aspect of a doctrine at the time when another aspect would be more useful. If the wrong half of a truth be applied instead of the right, or if either be mistaken for the whole, the sensibilities are mal-treated, and they endure an evil of which the musician's rude and unskilful handling of his harp, gives but a faint echo. The soul may be compared to a complicated instrument which becomes vocal in praise of its Maker when it is plied with varying powers, now with a gradual and then with a sudden contact, here with a delicate stroke and there with a hard assault; but when the rough blow comes where should have been the gentle touch, the equipoise of its parts is destroyed, and the harp of thousand strings all meant for harmony, wounds the ear with a harsh and grating sound. The dissonance of pious feeling with the mere generalities of speculation or with any misapplied fragments of truth, tends to confine them within their appropriate, which is their useful sphere. In this light, we discern the necessity of right feeling as a guide to the right proportions of faith. Here we see our responsibility for our religious belief. Here we are impressed by the fact, that much of our probation relates to our mode of shaping and coloring

¹ In consequence of the length of the Discourse, this paragraph and that which follows it, were omitted in the delivery.

the doctrines of theology. Here also we learn the value of the Bible in unfolding the suitable adaptations of truth, and in illustrating their utility, which is, on the whole, so decisive a touchstone of their correctness. When our earthly hopes are too buoyant we are reminded ‘that one event happeneth to all,’ and “that a man hath no preëminence above a beast;” but such a repressing part of a comprehensive fact is not suited to the sensual and sluggish man who needs rather, as he is directed, to see his ‘life and immortality brought to light.’ When we are elated with pride we are told that “man is a worm;” but this abasing part of a great doctrine should not engross the mind of him who despises his race, and who is therefore bidden to think of man as ‘crowned with glory and honor.’ If tempted to make idols of our friends, we are met by the requisition to ‘hate a brother, sister, father and mother;’ but these are not the most fitting words for him who loves to persecute his opposers, and who requires rather to be asked, “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” In one state of feeling we are stimulated to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling,” but in a different state we are encouraged to be neither anxious nor fearful, but to “rejoice in the Lord always.” I believe in the “final perseverance” of all who have been once renewed, for not only does the generalizing intellect gather up this doctrine from an induction of various inspired words, but the heart also is comforted by it in the hour of dismal foreboding. Yet when I wrest this truth from its designed adjustments, and misuse it in quieting the fears of men who are instigated to ‘count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing,’ I am startled by the threat that ‘if they shall fall away, it will be impossible to renew them *again* unto repentance.’ This threat was not designed, like the promise of preserving grace, to console the disconsolate, nor was that promise designed like this threat, to alarm the presumptuous. Let not the two appeals cross each other. My judgment, and, in some lofty views in which I need to be held up by the Divine Spirit lest I fall, my feelings also are unsatisfied without the biblical announcement that “the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart;” but at my incipient inclination to pervert these words into an excuse for sin, or a denial of my entire freedom, or of my Maker’s justice or tenderness, I regard them

as a "form of sound words" from which my depravity has expelled their spirit, and I flee for safety to the other words, which are a complement to the first, that "Pharaoh hardened his own heart." When even a Puritan bishop is inflated with his vain conceits, it is perilous for him to concentrate his feelings upon the keys with which he is to open or shut the door of heaven. Such a man should oftener tremble lest having been a servant of servants here, he be cast away hereafter. But with a melancholic though faithful pastor, this application of Scriptures may be reversed. We delight in the thought, that he who hath made everything beautiful in its season, who sendeth dew upon the earth when it has been heated by the sun, — and again, when it has been parched by drought, sendeth rain; who draweth the curtains of darkness around us when the eye is tired of the bright heavens, and irradiates the vision when the night has become wearisome; who intermingleth calm with tempest and parteth the clouds of an April day for the passage of the sun's rays, — hath also adopted a free, exuberant, refreshing method of imparting truth to the soul; giving us a series of revelations flexible and pliant, flitting across the mental vision with changeful hues, ever new, ever appropriate, not one of its words retaining its entire usefulness when removed from its fit junctions, not one of them being susceptible of a change for the better in the exigency when it was uttered, but each being "a word spoken in due season, how good is it."

There is a kind of conjectural doctrine, which in the Swedenborgian and Millenarian fancies is carried to a ruinous excess, but which within, not beyond the limit of its practical utility may be either justified or excused. Our feelings, for example, impel us to believe that we are compassed about with some kind of superior and ever wakeful intelligence. To meet this demand of the heart, Paganism has filled the air with divinities, but a wiser forecast has revealed to us the omnipresence of an all-comprehending mind. Still our restless desires would be sometimes gratified by a livelier representation of the spiritual existence around us, and accordingly in the more than paternal compassion of Jehovah, he maketh his angels ministering spirits, sent forth to attend upon the heirs of salvation, and to animate our spiritual atmosphere with a quick movement. But even yet, there are times

when the heart of man would be glad of something more than even these cheering revelations. We are comforted with the thought that our deceased companions still mingle with us, and aid us in our struggles to gain their purity, and that, after we have left the world to which thus far we have been so unprofitable, we shall be qualified by our hard discipline here, for more effective ministries to those who will remain in this scene of toil. Such a belief however is not one which the reason, left to itself, would fortify by other than the slightest hints. It is a belief prompted by the affections, and the indulgence in it is allowed by the intellectual powers no farther than it consoles and enlivens the spirit which is wearied with its earthly strifes. If we begin to think more of friends who visit us from heaven, than of Him who always abideth faithful around and over and within us, if we begin to search out witty inventions and to invoke the aid of patronizing saints, if we imagine that she who once kept all her child's sayings in her heart will now lay up in her motherly remembrance the *Ave Marias* of all who bless her image, then we push an innocent conjecture into the sphere of a harmful falsehood. The intellectual theology recognizes our felt need of a tenderness in the supervision which is exercised over us, but instead of meeting this necessity by picturing forth the love of one who after all may forget her very infant, it proves that we are ever enveloped in the sympathies of Him who will not give away to his saints the glory of answering our feeble prayers. The intellectual theology does indeed recognize our felt want of a Mediator, through whose friendly offices we may gain access to the pure, invisible, sovereign, strict lawgiver. But instead of an unearthly being canonized for his austere virtues, it gives us him who ate with sinners, who called around him fishermen rather than princes, and lodged with a tax-gatherer instead of the Roman governor, so as to remind us that he is not ashamed to call us brethren. Where men looked for a taper, it gives a light shining as the day, and hides the stars by the effulgence of the sun; where they looked for a friend it gives a Redeemer, where for a helper, a Saviour, where for hope, faith. It takes away in order to add more, thwarts a desire so as to give a fruition. It not so much unclothes as clothes upon, and swallows up our wish for patron saints in the brotherly sympathies of him who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

In conclusion allow me to observe, that in some aspects our theme suggests a melancholy, in others a cheering train of thought. It grieves us by disclosing the ease with which we may slide into grave errors. Such errors have arisen from so simple a cause as that of confounding poetry with prose. Men whose reasoning instinct has absorbed their delicacy of taste, have treated the language of a sensitive heart as if it were the guarded and wary style of the intellect. Intent on the sign more than on the thing signified, they have transubstantiated the living, spiritual truth into the very emblems which were designed to portray it. In the Bible there are pleasing hints of many things which were never designed to be doctrines, such as the literal and proper necessity of the will, passive and physical sin, baptismal regeneration, clerical absolution, the literal imputation of guilt to the innocent, transubstantiation, eternal generation and procession. In that graceful volume, these metaphors bloom as the flowers of the field; *there* they toil not neither do they spin. But the schoolman has transplanted them to the rude exposure of logic; here they are frozen up, their fragrance is gone, their juices evaporated, and their withered leaves are preserved as specimens of that which in its rightful place surpassed the glory of the wisest sage. Or, if I may change the illustration, I would say that these ideas, as presented in the Bible, are like oriental kings and nobles, moving about in their free, flowing robes, but in many a scholastic system they are like the embalmed bodies of those ancient lords, their spirits fled, their eyes, which once had speculation in them, now lack lustre; they are dry bones, exceeding dry. Not a few technical terms in theology are rhetorical beauties stiffened into logical perplexities; the exquisite growths of the imagination pressed and dried into the matter of a syllogism in Barbara. Many who discard their literal meaning retain the words out of reverence to antique fashions, out of an amiable fondness for keeping the nomenclature of science unbroken, just as the modern astronomer continues to classify the sweet stars of Heaven under the constellations of the Dragon and the Great Bear.¹

In this and in still other aspects our theme opens into more cheering views. It reveals the identity in the essence of many systems which are

¹ See Note II. at the end of the Discourse.

run in scientific or aesthetic moulds unlike each other. The full influence of it would do more than any World's Convention, in appeasing the jealousies of those good men who build their faith on Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone, and yet are induced, by unequal measures of genius and culture, to give different shapes to structures of the same material. There are indeed kinds of theology which cannot be reconciled with each other. There is a life, a soul, a vitalizing spirit of truth, which must never be relinquished for the sake of peace even with an angel. There is (I know that you will allow me to express my opinion,) a line of separation which cannot be crossed between those systems which insert, and those which omit the doctrine of justification by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. This is the doctrine which blends in itself the theology of intellect and that of feeling, and which can no more be struck out from the moral, than the sun from the planetary system. Here the mind and the heart, like justice and mercy, meet and embrace each other; and here is found the specific and ineffaceable difference between the Gospel and every other system. But among those who admit the atoning death of Christ as the organic principle of their faith, there are differences, some of them more important, but many far less important, than they seem to be. One man prefers a theology of the judgment; a second, that of the imagination; a third, that of the heart; one adjusts his faith to a lymphatic, another to a sanguine, and still another to a choleric temperament. Yet the subject matter of these heterogeneous configurations may often be one and the same, having for its nucleus the same cross, with the formative influence of which all is safe. Sometimes the intellectual divine has been denounced as unfeeling by the rude and coarse preacher, who in his turn has been condemned as vulgar or perhaps irreverent by the intellectual divine; while the one has meant to insinuate into the select few who listened to him, the very substance of the doctrine which the other has stoutly and almost literally *inculcated* into the multitudes by which he was thronged. The hard polemic has shown us only his visor and his coat of mail, while beneath his iron armor has been often cherished a theology of the gentle and humane affections. Dogmas of the most revolting shape have no sooner been cast into the alembic of a regenerated heart, than their more jagged angles have been melted away. We are cheered with a belief,

that in the darkest ages hundreds and thousands of unlettered men felt an influence which they could not explain, the influence of love attracting to itself the particles of truth that lay scattered along the symbols and scholastic forms of the church. The great mass of believers have never embraced the metaphysical refinements of creeds, useful as these refinements are ; but have singled out and fastened upon and held firm those cardinal truths, which the Bible has lifted up and turned over in so many different lights, as to make them the more conspicuous by their very alterations of figure and hue. The true history of doctrine is to be studied not in the technics, but in the spirit of the church. In unnumbered cases, the real faith of Christians has been purer than their written statements of it. Men, women, and children have often decided aright when doctors have disagreed, and doctors themselves have often felt aright when they have reasoned amiss. "In my heart," said a tearful German, "I am a Christian, while in my head I am a philosopher." Many who now dispute for an erroneous creed have, we trust, a richer belief imbedded in their inmost love. There are discrepant systems of philosophy pervading the sermons of different evangelical ministers, but often the rays of light which escape from these systems are so reflected and refracted, while passing through the atmosphere between the pulpit and the pews, as to end in producing about the same image upon the retina of every eye. Not seldom are the leaders of sects in a real variance when the people, who fill up the sects, know not why they are cut off from their brethren, and the people may strive in words while they agree in the thing, and their judgments may differ in the thing while their hearts are at one.

Thus divided against itself, thus introverting itself, thus multiform in its conceptions, so quick to seize at a truth as held up in one way, and spurn at it as held up in another, so marvellous in its tact for decomposing its honest belief, disowning with the intellect what it embraces with the affections, so much more versatile in regulating its merely inward processes than in directing the motions of an equilibrist, thus endued with an elastic energy more than Protean,—thus great is the soul, for the immense capabilities of which *Christ died*. Large-minded, then, and large-hearted must be the minister, having all the sensibility of a woman without becoming womanish, and all the perspicacity of a logician without being merely logical ; having that philoso-

ply which detects the substantial import of the heart's phrases, and having that emotion which invests philosophy with its proper life,—so wise and so good must the minister be, who applies to a soul of these variegated sensibilities the truth, which may wind itself into them all, as through a thousand pores; that truth, which God himself has matched to our nicest and most delicate springs of action, and which, so highly does he honor our nature, he has interposed by miracles for the sake of revealing in his written word; that word, which by its interchange of styles all unfolding the same idea, by its liberal construction of forms all enclosing the same spirit, prompts us to argue more for the broad central principles, and to wrangle less for the side, the party aspects of truth; that word, which ever pleases in order to instruct, and instructs in such divers ways in order to impress divers minds, and by all means to save some. Through the influence of such a Bible upon such a soul, and under the guidance of Him who gave the one and made the other, we do hope and believe, that the intellect will yet be enlarged so as to gather up all the discordant representations of the heart and employ them as the complements, or embellishments, or emphases of the whole truth; that the heart will be so expanded and refined as to sympathize with the most subtile abstractions of the intellect; that many various forms of faith will yet be blended into a consistent knowledge, like the colors in a single ray; and thus will be ushered in the reign of the Prince of peace, when the lion shall lie down with the lamb, when the body shall no more hang as a weight upon the soul, and the soul no longer wear upon its material frame-work, when the fancy shall wait upon rather than trifle with the judgment, and the judgment shall not be called as now to restrain the fancy, when the passions shall clarify rather than darken the reasoning powers, and the conscience shall not be summoned as now to curb the passions, when the intellect shall believe, not without the heart, nor against the heart, but *with the heart unto salvation*; and the soul, being one with itself, shall also be one with all the saints, in adoring one Lord, cherishing one faith, and being buried in one baptism; and when we who are united unto Christ on earth, he dwelling in us and we in him, shall, in answer to his last prayer for us, be made perfect with him in God.

NOTES.

NOTE A. Page 5.

This reasoning is valid only on the supposition that our Saviour died for all men.—One of Mr. Symington's arguments for the doctrine that Christ made his atonement for a part only, not the whole of the race, is derived, singular as it may appear, from the "rectitude of the divine character." He says in his Treatise on the Atonement, Part I. Sect. XI. § 11. 2: "The supreme Being gives to every one his due. This principle cannot be violated in a single instance. He cannot, according to this, either remit sin without satisfaction, or punish sin where satisfaction for it has been received. The one is as inconsistent with perfect equity as the other. If the punishment for sin has been borne, the remission of the offence follows of course. The principles of rectitude suppose this, nay peremptorily demand it; justice could not be satisfied without it. Agreeably to this reasoning it follows, that the death of Christ being a legal satisfaction for sin, all for whom he died must enjoy the remission of their offences. It is as much at variance with strict justice or equity, that any for whom Christ has given satisfaction should continue under condemnation, as that they should have been delivered from guilt without a satisfaction being given for them at all. But it is admitted, that all are not delivered from the punishment of sin, that there are many who perish in final condemnation. We are therefore compelled to infer, that for such no satisfaction has been given to the claims of infinite justice—no atonement has been made. If this is denied, the monstrous impossibility must be maintained, that the infallible judge refuses to remit the punishment of some for whose offences he has received a full compensation; that he finally condemns some the price of whose deliverance from condemnation has been paid to him; that, with regard to the sins of some of mankind, he seeks satisfaction in their personal punishment after having obtained satisfaction for them in the sufferings of Christ; that is to say, that an infinitely righteous God takes double payment for the same debt, double satisfaction for the same offence, first from the surety, and then from those for whom the surety stood bound. It is needless to add that these conclusions are revolting to every right feeling of equity, and must be totally inapplicable to the procedure of Him who *'loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness.'*"

Mr. Symington's inferences in this paragraph are correct, if his premises are to be

understood as intellectual statements of the truth. But Dr. Jonathan Edwards (in his Works, Vol. II. p. 26) teaches us that "Christ has not in the *literal* and *proper* sense paid the debt for us;" that this expression and others similar to it are "metaphorical expressions, and therefore not literally and exactly true." He says further (Works, Vol. II. p. 8) concerning *distributive* justice, that it "is not at all satisfied by the death of Christ. But *general* justice to the Deity and to the universe is satisfied." A similar remark he appends with regard to the satisfaction of the law. See also Andrew Fuller's Works, Vol. IV. pp. 92—100. 1st Am. Ed.

A true representation seems to be, that although Christ has not literally paid the debt of sinners, nor literally borne their punishment, nor satisfied the legislative or the remunerative justice of God in any such sense or degree as itself to make it *obligatory* on him to save any sinners; yet the atonement has such a relation to the whole moral government of God, as to make it *consistent* with the honor of his legislative and retributive justice to save all men, and to make it essential to the highest honor of his benevolence or general justice to renew and save some. Therefore it satisfies the law and justice of God *so far and in such a sense*, as to render it proper for him not only to give many temporal favors, but also to offer salvation to all men, bestow it upon all who will accept it, and cause those to accept it, for whom the interests of the universe allow him to interpose his regenerating grace.

NOTE B. Page 10.

It has already been explained, that *the* theology of the intellect, is the system which recommends itself to a dispassionate and unprejudiced mind as true, and the present discourse has no direct and prominent reference to the various forms of intellectual theology which, in the view of such a mind, are false. It has also been explained, that *the* theology of the heart is the collection of statements which recommend themselves to the healthy moral feelings as right, and the present discourse has no direct and prominent reference to the various forms of representation which are suggested by and suited to the diseased, the perverted moral feelings. One of the most graphic descriptions of a theology which is neither of a sound intellect nor sound heart, but is alike impervious to argument, reckless of consequences, and dependent on an ill-balanced state of the sensibilities, may be found in the following Letter to Dr. Henry Ware, Jr. That calm reasoner had published a sermon in opposition to some injurious sentiments which had been recently propounded at Cambridge, and in acknowledging the receipt of the sermon, the advocate of those sentiments replied:—If your discourse "assails any doctrines of mine, — perhaps I am not so quick to see it as writers generally, — certainly I did not feel any disposition to depart from my habitual contentment, that you should say your thought, whilst I say mine.

"I believe I must tell you what I think of my new position. It strikes me very oddly, that good and wise men at Cambridge and Boston should think of raising me

into an object of criticism. I have always been,—from my very incapacity of methodical writing, — ‘a chartered libertine,’ free to worship and free to rail, — lucky when I could make myself understood, but never esteemed near enough to the institutions and mind of society to deserve the notice of the masters of literature and religion. I have appreciated fully the advantages of my position; for I well know, that there is no scholar less willing or less able to be a polemic. I could not give account of myself if challenged. I could not possibly give you one of the ‘arguments’ you cruelly hint at, on which any doctrine of mine stands. For I do not know what arguments mean, in reference to any expression of a thought. I delight in telling what I think; but if you ask me how I dare say so, or, why it is so, I am the most helpless of mortal men. I do not even see, that either of these questions admits of an answer. So that, in the present droll posture of my affairs, when I see myself suddenly raised into the importance of a heretic, I am very uneasy when I advert to the supposed duties of such a personage, who is to make good his thesis against all comers.

“I certainly shall do no such thing. I shall read what you and other good men write, as I have always done,—glad when you speak my thoughts, and skipping the page that has nothing for me. I shall go on, just as before, seeing whatever I can, and telling what I see; and, I suppose, with the same fortune that has hitherto attended me; the joy of finding, that my abler and better brothers, who work with the sympathy of society, loving and beloved, do now and then unexpectedly confirm my perceptions, and find my nonsense is only their own thought in motley. And so I am your affectionate servant, R. W. EMERSON.”

One of the amazing mal-adjustments in human life, is that in which a pious man has such idiosyncracies, or has been so mis-educated as to believe in a false intellectual system, and to feel an impulsive attachment to it. He is of all men the most incorrigible. Argument is wasted upon him, and his prejudices are the more unyielding because fortified by conscience. He is also an unhappy man, for his erroneous views do not harmonize entirely or easily with his pious feelings. Hence he often becomes a schismatic, a disorganizer, a crossed and uncomfortable member of society, a public phenomenon.

NOTE C. Page 13.

The censure frequently pronounced upon the style in which writers like Baxter, Bunyan, and Davies describe the punishment of the lost, is no further merited, than this style can be shown to be unfaithful to the truth, or to the imperative necessities of the minds to which it was addressed. If the publications of the American Tract Society, which are designed not for philosophical criticism but for practical impression, should, as some would have them, describe the future state of the lost as it is described by a merely scientific theologian, they would forfeit their popular influence, and perhaps would convey error instead of truth to the mass of their

readers. That all uninspired volumes are imperfect in delineating "the terrors of the Lord," is doubtless true. Their imperfection, however, does not consist in their using the Biblical forms of statement, but in their deviating from or else misapplying these forms. Our Saviour adopted a different phraseology from that of the prophets before him, and that of the apostles after him; and a wise preacher would not exhort a Newton and a Leibnitz in the same terms, although he would use the same great ideas, which he would employ in addressing little children, or in expostulating with the rudest and coarsest of malefactors. The Biblical impression of the particular incidents in the eternal punishment of some and the eternal blessedness of others, is of course the best impression which can be made upon the heart; but the mental eye hath not seen, nor ear heard of the exact, precise instruments which God hath prepared for the retribution of those who hate, or of those who love him.

NOTE D. Page 17.

It is on the principles indicated in the preceding topic, that the aphorism of Pascal (*Thoughts*, ch. III.) may be explained: God "has chosen that" divine truths "should enter from the heart into the mind, and not from the mind into the heart, in order to humble that proud power of reasoning, which pretends it should be the judge of things which the will chooses, and to reform that infirm will which is wholly corrupt through its unworthy inclinations. And hence, instead of saying, as men do when speaking of human things, that we must know them before we can love them, which has passed into a proverb, the saints, when speaking of divine things, say, that we must love them in order to know them, and that we receive the truth only by love;—which is one of their most useful maxims." These words mean, not that the heart ever perceives, for the intellect only is percipient, but that holy feelings prompt the intellect to new discoveries, furnish it with new materials for examination and inference, and regulate it in its mode of combining and expressing what it has discerned. An affection of the heart toward a truth develops a new relation of that truth, and the intellect perceives the relation thus suggested by the feeling. On the same principles may we interpret the celebrated paradox of Anselm, of Canterbury: "I do not seek to understand a truth in order that I may believe it, but I believe it in order that I may understand it." This remark may be made to appear rational by the paraphrase: I first have some idea of a doctrine; I then cordially believe all that I have an idea of; next, by the love involved in this hearty faith I am inspirited to form still more definite ideas of that which I had before perceived clearly enough to believe it affectionately; and at last, by the relation which is thus developed between the doctrine and my feelings, I obtain yet more distinct and extended ideas of it, so that I may be said to understand it.

NOTE E. Page 21.

The preceding illustration suggests *some*, not all, of the causes why the doctrine that men are unable to be more virtuous than they really are, becomes less injurious as it is taught by pious divines than as it is taught by infidel philosophers.

One generic cause is, that the earnest preacher often contradicts in his exhortation what he has seemed to advocate in his discussion; but the intellectual deist has not the *heart* to modify his denial of human freedom; he retains in all exigencies the unbending theory, that man has no power to be better than he is.

A *second* subordinate cause, really included in the first, is, that the Christian points this doctrine chiefly to the present or the future, but the infidel extends it equally to the past. The pious necessarian has a good moral purpose in declaring that the *present* and *future* obligations of men, do and will exceed their power; he designs to foster thus a spirit of dependence on God; but, for another good moral purpose, he shrinks from informing men that their *past* obligations exceeded their power. The reckless fatalist, however, is as willing to assert that men *have* obeyed the law heretofore to the extent of their ability, as that men *will have* no ability, without supernatural aid, to obey the law hereafter. He is ready to stifle remorse by assuring the convicts of a penitentiary, that they have possessed no more power than they have exercised to choose aright; that is, their choices have been as benevolent as they could have been. It is doubtless true, that in precisely the same sense in which a man *is or will be* unable to perform his duty, in that sense he *has* performed his duty as well as he was able to perform it, has done all the good which was possible for him to do. But the best feelings of a Christian forbid his use of such language in regard to the past, favor his use of the opposite, and thus induce him to mitigate the evils of asserting without qualification that man's power is less than his duty.

A *third* reason, why the necessarianism of Christian divines becomes less injurious than the fatalism of infidel philosophers is, that the most trust-worthy of these divines acknowledge their necessarian doctrine to be expressed in the language of the emotions, while the fatalist contends for the intellectual exactness of his phraseology. The wise preacher believes in only a moral, the fatalist in a natural impotence. In Andrew Fuller's *Apparent Contradictions Reconciled* (Works, Vol. VIII. pp. 51—55, First Am. Ed.), his fourth proposition is, "The depravity of human nature is such that no man, of his own accord, will come to Christ for life;" and his fifth proposition is, "The degree of this depravity is such, as that, figuratively speaking, men cannot come to Christ for life." The younger Pres. Edwards says (Works, Vol. I. p. 307), "Dr. Clarke, in his *Remarks on Collins* (p. 16), gives a true account of moral necessity: 'By *moral necessity* consistent writers never mean any more than to express in a figurative manner the *certainty* of such an event.'" Dr. Day (on the Will, p. 107) remarks, "We are not justified in pronouncing this *figurative* use to be wholly improper" (inadmissible). The elder Pres. Edwards,

although he may not have applied the epithet *figurative* to the necessarian terminology which he employs, yet often applies to it the epithet *improper*, which means in this connection not inadmissible but figurative. "No inability whatsoever," he says (on the Will, Part III. Sect. IV.), "which is merely moral, is properly called by the name of *inability*." Natural inability "alone is properly called inability." "I have largely declared," he says in his Letter against the literal necessarianism of Lord Kames (Works, Vol. II. pp. 293-4, Ed. 1829), "that the connection between antecedent things and consequent ones which takes place with regard to the acts of men's wills, which is called moral necessity, is called by the name of *necessity* improperly; and that all such terms as *must*, *cannot*, *impossible*, *unable*, *irresistible*, *unavoidable*, *invincible*, etc., when applied here, are not applied in their proper signification, and are either used nonsensically and with perfect insignificance, or in a sense quite diverse from their original and proper meaning, and their use in common speech; and that such a necessity as attends the acts of men's will is more properly called *certainty* than *necessity*; it being no other than the certain connection between the subject and predicate of the proposition which affirms their existence."

So sure is it that man with his unrenowned nature will sin, and only sin in his moral acts, and so important is it that this infallible certainty be *felt* to be true, that our hearts often incline us to designate it by the most forcible epithets. These epithets often make the truth appear obvious to those whom pride has removed to a distance from it, just as the colossal proportions of a statue raised above the capital of a pillar, make the statue appear like the exact image of a man to those who look up to it from the remote valley. But if we infer from the literal meaning of necessity, that our so-called necessary choices are in fact inevitable, we commit the same mistake as if we should infer from the colossal dimensions of the statue, that the individual represented by it is a giant. It is easy to see, that the language of feeling in which divines may and do occasionally express the certainty of wrong choice, must be different in its influence from the language of the intellect in which fatalists invariably express their doctrine of the necessity of all choice. The demands of a soul which loves to invoke aid from Heaven, are met by a faithful description of that certainty which, in the words of Pres. Day (Examination of Edwards, p. 167), is a "necessity falsely so called." The truth is mournful, humbling, well fitted to awaken a spirit of prayer, that man left to himself will *invariably*, *surely* sin, but it gives no sanction to the demoralizing falsehood that, in the literal and proper sense, he *must inevitably* sin.

That the terms of feeling and of common life should have been adopted as the scientific nomenclature on the subject of the will, has been submissively regretted by our best theologians. He must be a strong man who can bear up under this cumbrous nomenclature without lapsing sometimes into its literal, which is not its technical meaning; and many a Samson having been overpowered by its heaviness, has been compelled to "grind in the prison-house" of Gaza. In one of his most eloquent passages, Pres. Edwards thus laments the deceptive influence of

these "terms of art:" "Nothing that I maintain supposes that men are at all hindered by any fatal necessity, from doing and even willing and choosing as they please, with full freedom; yea, with the highest degree of liberty that ever was thought of, or that ever could possibly enter into the heart of any man to conceive. I know it is in vain to endeavor to make some persons believe this, or at least fully and steadily to believe it; for if it be demonstrated to them, still the old prejudice remains, which has been long fixed by the use of the terms *necessary, must, cannot, impossible*, etc.; the association with these terms of certain ideas inconsistent with liberty, is not broken; and the judgment is powerfully warped by it; as a thing that has been long bent and grown stiff, if it be straightened, will return to its former enervity again and again." (Works, Vol. II. pp. 293, 294. Ed. 1829.)

The epithets *figurative, improper*, when applied by the Edwardses, Fuller, Day, and others, to the necessarian phraseology of the will, are to be understood according to the principles laid down in the preceding Discourse, p. 8.

NOTE F. Page 27.

We have a safeguard against the dreams of visionaries in the two principles already stated, that reason has an ultimate, rightful authority over the sensibilities, and that it will sanction not only all *pious* feelings, but likewise all those which are *essential* developments of our original constitution. As the head is placed above the heart in the body, so the faith which is sustained by good argument, should control rather than be controlled by those emotions which receive no approval from the judgment. The perfection of our faith is, that it combine in its favor the logic of the understanding with the rhetoric of the feelings, and that it exclude all those puerilities and extravagances, which have nothing to recommend them but the pretended inspirations of the fanatic. Whenever a discrepancy exists between a creed and an expression of devotional feeling, as for example between the "Thirty-nine Articles" and the "Book of Common Prayer," the symbol of faith ought to be in a style so prosaic and definite as to form the decisive standard of appeal, and to explain, rather than be explained by the liturgical, which are apt to be fervid utterances.

NOTE G. Page 25.

The fallen, evil nature, which precedes and certainly occasions a man's first actual sin, is, like all other evil, odious, loathsome. So prolific is it in results which are so melancholy, that while we are trembling at its power, we are roused up to stigmatize it as "sinful." We may thus earnestly reprobate it, if we do not insist that the word "sinful" shall be interpreted, in scientific language, to mean that quality which is itself worthy of punishment. In our abhorrence of this disordered state of our sensibilities, we may call it "blamable," if we do not insist that a man is to be blamed for being involuntarily in this calamitous state; we may call it "guilty," if

we mean by this word "intimately connected with guilt," or "exposing us to suffering," for this diseased nature leads to sin, and thereby to its most painful consequences. We may in fact apply any epithet whatever to our inborn, involuntary corruption, provided that this epithet express our dread or hatred of it, and do not require the belief that a passive condition, previous to all active disobedience, is itself deserving of punishment. As there was much that was amiable in the young man who possessed nothing holy, so there is much that is unamiable, and still not properly sinful, in every man. But although in our fervid diaries we may often pour these unmeasured reproaches upon our corrupt nature, yet in a scientific treatise we embarrass ourselves by using the emotional, as if it were didactic language; by applying the loose terms of the heart to themes where the sharpest discrimination is needed; by speaking, as many do, of a kind of sin for which the man who is charged with it does not, in the view of conscience, deserve to be punished; by reasoning about a state for which the child involuntarily subjected to it is "guilty," but not himself properly blamable. The well-schooled divine *may*, although he seldom *does* escape the confusing influence of this ambiguous nomenclature; but men who are conversant with only the "English undefiled" of our literature, are led by such a peculiar, when used as a dogmatic phraseology, into serious, perhaps fatal prejudices against the truth. When these terms, often allowable for the heart, are used for the intellect, they change their character, and although meant for "the lights of science," they fail of their artificial purpose, and become "in many instances the shades of religion."

Is it said, however, that a passive nature, existing antecedently to all free action, is itself, strictly, literally sinful? Then we must have a new language, and speak, in prose, of moral *patients* as well as moral agents, of men *besinned* as well as sinners, (for *ex vi termini* sinners as well as runners must be active); we must have a new conscience which can decide on the moral character of dormant conditions, as well as of elective preferences; a new law, prescribing the very *make* of the soul, as well as the way in which this soul, when made, shall act; and a law which we transgress (for sin is "a transgression of the law") in being before birth passively misshapen; we must also have a new Bible, delineating a judgment scene in which some will be condemned, not only on account of the deeds which they have done in the body, but also for having been born with an involuntary proclivity to sin, and others will be rewarded not only for their conscientious love to Christ, but also for a blind nature inducing that love; we must, in fine, have an entirely different class of moral sentiments, and have them disciplined by Inspiration in an entirely different manner from the present; for now the feelings of all true men revolt from the assertion, that a poor infant dying, if we may suppose it to die, before its first wrong preference, *merits* for its unavoidable nature, that eternal punishment, which is threatened, and justly, against even the smallest real *sin*. Although it may seem paradoxical to affirm that "a man may believe a proposition which he knows to be false," it is yet charitable to say that whatever any man may suppose himself to believe, he has in fact an inward conviction, that "all sin consists in sinning."

There is comparatively little dispute on the nature of moral evil, when the words relating to it are fully understood.

NOTE H. Page 32.

It is a noted remark of John Foster, that many technical terms of theology, instead of being the signs, are the monuments of the ideas which they were first intended to signify. Now it is natural for men to garnish the sepulchre of one whom, when living, they would condemn.

When it is said in palliation for certain technics of theology, that they are no more uncouth or equivocal than are the technics of some physical sciences, we may reply, that the sacred science above all others should, where it fairly can, be so presented as to allure rather than repel men of classical taste, and not superadd factitious offences to the natural "offence of the cross." True, we may be deceived by the figurative terms of mineralogy or botany, but we are less liable to mistake the meaning of words which refer to material phenomena, than the meaning of those which refer to spiritual, and then an error in physics is far less baneful than one in religion. If chemical substances were denoted by words borrowed from moral science, if one acid were figuratively called "sanctification," and one alkali were termed "depravity," and one solution were denominated "eternal punishment," we should weep over the sad results of such a profane style, even if it were well intended. And on a similar principle, when we read of "the vindictive justice of God," although we revere the authors who use the term in its technical sense, we mourn over the ruinous impression that will be made by such a piously meant phrase. Doubtless it may be needful for us to refer occasionally to the obnoxious technics which were once in such authoritative use, but if we make them *prominent*, or if, in employing them, we neglect to explain their peculiar meaning, we unwittingly convey false and pernicious ideas to men who are wont to call things by their right names.

It is against some first principles of rhetoric to say, that we may safely regulate our scientific nomenclature by the figurative expressions of the Bible. These expressions are easily understood in the spirit which prompted them, but are less easily understood in the spirit of the schools. If all the Biblical figures were arranged into a system, and if, when thus classified, they were reasoned upon as literal and dogmatic truths, we should have, on an extended scale, the same allegorical logic, which we now have on a scale so limited as to conceal many of its injurious effects. Perhaps we should then begin to shape the Copernican and Newtonian philosophy in the mould of the passage, "The Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down." Some errors are most easily refuted by carrying them out to their entire length with all possible consistency. An extreme view of them develops their essential nature. What is a large part of Quakerism, and even Swedenborgianism, but a collection of fancies, interesting as such, but now flattened into theories?

DR. WOODBRIDGE'S SERMON,
BEFORE THE CONVENTION OF
CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS IN MASSACHUSETTS,
May 29, 1851.



THE FALLACY OF A PRIORI CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING GOD.

A

S E R M O N

DELIVERED IN BRATTLE STREET CHURCH, BOSTON,

BEFORE THE CONVENTION OF

CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS IN MASSACHUSETTS,

May 29, 1851.

BY JOHN WOODBRIDGE, D. D.

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S E R M O N .

WHO HATH DIRECTED THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD, OR, BEING HIS COUNSELLOR, HATH TAUGHT HIM? WITH WHOM TOOK HE COUNSEL, AND WHO INSTRUCTED HIM, AND TAUGHT HIM IN THE PATH OF JUDGMENT, AND TAUGHT HIM KNOWLEDGE, AND SHEWED TO HIM THE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING? BEHOLD, THE NATIONS ARE AS A DROP OF A BUCKET, AND ARE COUNTED AS THE SMALL DUST OF THE BALANCE: BEHOLD, HE TAKETH UP THE ISLES AS A VERY LITTLE THING,—ISAIAH XL: 13, 14, 15.

WE have in this passage an eloquent and impressive assertion of God's infinite superiority to all counsel and control from his creatures. Except so far as he sees fit to reveal his designs, they are undiscoverable by any art or sagacity of the highest orders of his rational offspring. The doctrine of the text is that of the scriptures in general; and commends itself to every reflecting and enlightened mind. As a truth of great practical importance, it should be remembered in all our religious enquiries, and in the opinions we adopt concerning God, and the principles and conduct of his government. Not a little of the reasoning which is employed, in relation to the Most High, is rash and presumptuous; assuming a degree of knowledge in creatures, which is incompatible with the necessary limitation of their faculties, and their dependence on the Creator.

Agreeably to the spirit of the text, I intend in this discourse to discuss the subject of a priori conclusions respecting God, or enquire as to the legitimacy of attempts to decide from his

known perfections, or his relations to us, what he must be, determine, and do, in other respects than those, which come under our special cognizance. Some knowledge of him we may possess ; and we may have evidence, that our apprehensions of him, so far as they extend, are in accordance with truth. His existence and perfections are in general manifest from his works ;—the argument is a familiar one, yet conclusive ; and no sophisms, or crude theories, which have ever been invented to overthrow it, can suffice for the purpose, in the view of such, as prefer lucid statement to obscurity, and the unfaltering decisions of plain common sense to the flights of an untamed imagination. That the world is an effect ; that every effect requires an adequate cause ; and that no cause, but one infinitely wise, powerful and good, could have been adequate to the production of such a world as this, in its numerous compartments of utility, harmony, beauty and grandeur ;—are propositions scarcely less than self-evident. If not a single piece of mechanism, as a chronometer, or a steam engine, could spring into existence casually, or by the force of some blind principle in nature ; is it credible, that this mighty, most complicated, yet most harmonious system of the universe, originated from influences absolutely fortuitous, or from no influences at all ? The Maker of the world, the Originator of all dependent things, cannot be otherwise than self-existent, independent, eternal, infinite, and unchangeable ;—and his intelligence must be equal to his power. Atheism and Pautheism are alike absurd, not to be admitted without violence to that rational and moral nature, by which we are distinguished from mere animals. The existence of a Being, clothed with divine attributes, is assumed in the Bible as a first principle, a foundation-stone, on which is built the entire fabric of all true religion, natural and revealed. The admission of God's existence supposes, of course, that he will do nothing inconsistent with his perfections, or really dishonorable to his government. He cannot, for example, in any instance of his conduct, betray actual weakness, or ignorance, or injustice, or malevolence ; and the ascription to him, of any

of these qualities would be blasphemy. "God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all." It by no means follows, however, that we are competent, in all specific cases, to determine what purposes and acts in the Deity, are or are not consonant to those perfections, which all genuine believers in Revelation, must admit, constitute his essential and immutable glory. The evidence of his possession of certain attributes is plain; but to suppose us capable of prejudging the definite modes by which they should be manifested, is to assume our equality, in point of knowledge, with Him, whose designs and ways we attempt to explore.

I shall now adduce a number of considerations, illustrative and confirmatory of the position I have laid down concerning the inadequacy of our powers, to foresee the precise courses of action, most becoming in God, or demanded by his absolute perfection.

1. The *infinitude*, in all respects, of the Supreme Being, demonstrates the truth of our doctrine. The limitless extent of all His perfections follows incontrovertibly from the process of argument, by which we establish the fact of his existence, and the supremacy of his dominion. By whatever steps we arrive at the conclusion that He exists, we are driven, at the same time, and to the same degree, to the conclusion of the absoluteness of all His attributes, as incapable alike of diminution, and of increase. By any lower views than these, we virtually rob Him of His Divinity, and undermine all the solid foundations of our religious confidence and hope. We tear away the key-stone, which binds together the great arch of universal harmony. Allow God to be imperfect in one particular, he may also be in another, and in another, and in all that pertains to His nature and operations; and he may be liable to such changes, as will prove at last subversive of all His past counsels, of the empire which He has established, and of His very throne itself. A God thus mutable could not have been the Creator of the world. Such a God cannot uphold and govern this mighty creation. The slightest imperfection in

Jehovah would mar all;—would scatter to the winds all the sweet expectations and reliances of His oppressed and suffering people. An arm absolutely resistless, guided by a mind of ilimitable intelligence, and a heart of consummate rectitude and goodness, is surely requisite to the accomplishment of such a labor as God performs. Undeniably too, he must possess strict eternity and independence, which, it were easy to show, involve, in the highest sense of the term, unqualified infinity. INFINITY! What finite mind can fully grasp the amazing idea? In whatever manner it comes to us—whether it be innate, as many of the school-men supposed—or whether it be a kind of negative conception, formed by a course of reasoning, or the perpetual accumulation of numbers, agreeably to the views of most English writers, from Locke downwards,—it is still overwhelming, transcending in magnitude, beyond all comparison, actual or imaginary, the utmost stretch of man's limited faculties. The common illustrations of what eternity is, or rather of what it is not, for example, however pertinent and just they may be, leave us in a state of bewilderment and awe, which no human language can adequately express. After all our efforts, we have travelled only a few feet into the shoals of a dark, shoreless, bottomless ocean, whose distant roar still breaks upon our ear, with ever increasing majesty, and mysterious fearfulness. *Immensity* is no less incomprehensible than endless duration. Remove all bounds from any subject, and we stand amazed and tremble, conscious of our littleness, and, as it were, self-annihilated at the thought. The profoundest logic, the sublimest mathematical comprehension, are as impotent here, as the earliest and most imbecile conceptions of childhood. Bacon and Newton are on the same level with the humblest of their pupils, or the most plodding and dull day laborer; and Gabriel and his compeers cover their faces with a sacred reverence, unknown to mortals on the earth. What say you of a *knowledge* absolutely infinite, embracing all the realities, all the connexions, and all the possibilities of being, as in one fixed, great conception? What, of a *power*, which can create, as

well as fashion, in endlessly diversified forms ; sustaining and managing, with equal ease, a mote, a pebble, a world, and the entire system of material and immaterial existence, through the realms of unlimited space? What, of a *goodness*, which is commensurate, in extent and duration, with such measureless greatness? Yet these are the attributes of the Supreme. A Being, in any respect, less than this, is not the God of revelation,—not the God of nature—not the God, whom our wants demand, and on whom, amidst all the agitations and turmoils of this changing world, we may rely for the accomplishment of that good, which the universe needs. *We, little things!* are we able to dictate to Him, or to advise Him, or whisper suggestions in His ear, with respect to the ends He should select or the precise means He should adopt, in carrying His designs into execution? Is it for us to mark out limits for the walks, and doings, and non-doings of the Lord God omnipotent? If His acts thwart our previous judgment of what is most worthy of Him, shall we, on this account, doubt His wisdom, or benevolence? We smile, and well we may smile, at the conceit of a mere babe in political science, who thinks himself qualified to give laws to a nation and who exalts himself, in opposition to all the lessons of experience, and the opinions of the greatest and best men, as a reformer of all alleged abuses in the social system. Such a sciolist, however, is to be commended for modesty, in comparison with the poor creature of a day, who would raise himself to the high elevation of a counsellor to the Great Monarch of earth and heaven. This view of the subject is as scriptural as it is rational. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven ; what canst thou know? Deeper than hell, what canst thou do? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.” “The thunder of His power, who can understand?” Observe with what holy diffidence the Apostle contemplates the profound abyss of

the Divine glories. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory forever."

2. The same doctrine is confirmed by a consideration of the magnitude and boundless variety of the Creator's works, and the wide connexions and interminable duration of His empire. These are views which cannot fail to strike every attentive observer. The savage can see enough in the objects that daily meet his eye to excite his profound astonishment, and to rebuke the presumption which would undertake to sound the depths, and overtop the heights, of eternal wisdom. All the discoveries of science in every branch—Astronomy, Geology, Physics, and Psychology—serve but to supply new arguments, for the establishment of our general position. There is incomprehensible *greatness*, and there is also evident *system*, in all the Divine operations. Nothing is insulated—nothing is useless. As there is no redundancy in God's works; so there is nothing wanting in the plan, taken as a whole, of his complicated, vast and wondrous agency. Absolute casualty is impossible. The invisible gas, the sun-beam, and the stupendous mechanism of nature, in its largeness and variety, are alike produced, sustained, directed, for objects worthy of the Divine Architect. Every advancement in the knowledge of His works serves but to strengthen our conviction of comprehensive, undeviating unity of design in God, and of the certainty of its ultimate and perfect accomplishment. At the same time, we are impressed more and more by the painful consciousness of our ignorance. Numerous relations exist, which we cannot trace;—disclosures of facts and principles continually occur bewildering to our imagination, and baffling all the conjectures of our reason. Though we see satisfactory evidence of a wise, general design, yet almost every particular event which we

witness, is connected with inscrutable mysteries. What is the *basis*, the *substratum*, which holds together qualities and attributes in any being? We cannot tell. Wonders, like floods of glory, are above, around, beneath us; we hear the dashings of the multitudinous surge; we catch glimpses of the indescribable brightness;—*and that is all*. Are we capable of determining beforehand, what the great, the incomprehensible God can and ought to do, in order to secure the ends of His infinitely perfect government? Is it for us to say, what shall be the number, the construction, the adjustments, and the motions of those wheels, which are employed to carry forward the mighty machine of nature and of moral agency, to its ultimate destination?

It is difficult for an ordinary mind to see what measures are best adapted to promote the interests of a great nation; and the most sagacious politicians often find themselves perplexed, and utterly at loss in their endeavors to ascertain the right and the safe in their public policy. Who of our race would be able to dictate the general method, with the minute details, of government, necessary to the highest good of a single planet? In such a work, a Chatham, a Hamilton, a Webster, would feel, would acknowledge themselves to be but children. Idiocy or madness alone could claim competency for such an undertaking. But it is not one world merely that God governs;—a countless host of worlds, stretching into immensity, all marshalled in complete array, and moving on in harmony to declare his perfections—obey continually his high behest. What is done in one little spot in his dominions, or by an obscure individual, or by the worm we tread upon, must in some manner affect the whole; and He, the matchless Sovereign, must provide for all contingencies, all possibilities, all the relationships and interests of each and all parts of his boundless empire. Is it for us to prescribe the proper, and the right, and the needful, in circumstances like these? Were we the only creatures formed by his power, were all but the brief space we occupy, an utter solitude,—our pride might well be nonplussed at so bold an at-

tempt ;—how much more now, when the very globe we inhabit, is but an atom in the unlimited panorama of his works? Nor is this all.

Suppose our faculties so enlarged, that we could comprehend what now is, we should not, on this account, be qualified to prejudge the measures proper for God to adopt hereafter. To accomplish such a task, we must be able to look through eternity, as well as grasp immensity. The present is but the first act in a drama, whose plot will be developing more and more, through an endless duration. Can we determine by our own wisdom, what may or must be, through all futurity? If so, our knowledge must be absolutely infinite; and all weighing of evidence must be as needless for us, as for God himself. But who of us will pretend to infallibility? That which may appear, to us unwise now, may prove to be the perfection of wisdom in the end; the to us seeming blunder, or digression, may be but the necessary link, fastening the destinies of the universe to his throne; and what we may now account unrighteousness in Him, may be but the cloud of glory, in which he wraps himself for the present, and from which will ultimately break forth, in overpowering splendor, his rectitude, purity, truth, and tender mercy.

3. Our argument is strengthened by a consideration of the power of prejudice, and the blinding nature of sin, from which none of us can plead exemption. We are not likely to be impartial judges in a case, where truth pronounces our condemnation. Our pride resists that light, which discloses to us its meanness, odiousness and guilt. Will the rebel be disposed to think well of severe restraints, of punishments, for his crime? Will he not, on the contrary, very naturally employ all his powers of reason to justify, or at least, to extenuate his rebellion? Will he be apt to judge correctly concerning the rights and duties of the government, to which he is hostile? To state these questions clearly is to answer them. That mankind are morally depraved, to whatever cause the fact may be ascribed, is too plain to be denied. At a very early period

in life, they manifest dispositions and affections, contrary to perfect virtue, and indicating the fall of their nature from its original purity. While they may exhibit amiable instincts, and social humanities, they are evidently averse to a spiritual, humbling, self-denying religion ; and are strongly inclined to views concerning God, most dishonorable to his wisdom, and righteousness. Hence, as the Scriptures assure us, originate all the atheism, all the idolatry, and all the impure and cruel forms of worship, by which mankind have degraded their rational nature, and reproached and vilified their Maker. The greatest philosophers have been as far from pious reverence, and love to the perfections and government of God, as the most ignorant and besotted savages. Such is the testimony of impartial history, as well as of Isaiah, and the Apostle Paul. And, is it reasonable to believe, that they who “do not like to retain God in their knowledge” will be candid in their judgment respecting the measures of his administration ? Who would ask the confirmed State criminal to settle questions concerning the turpitude and ill-desert of rebellion ? The difference of one’s opinion, with respect to any wrong act, *before* and *after* its commission, is notorious. Nor will a man’s judgment be any the more clear and impartial, because the government he has offended is that of God, whose plan embraces the highest well-being of the universe, through eternity. On the other hand, selfishness will create prejudices, proportioned in strength to the magnitude of the interests concerned, and the absoluteness and resistlessness of the authority, which is made the subject of inquiry. A man, it is true, may be convinced against his wishes ; but in that case, the conviction must break through all the barriers, which self-love has reared, to prevent its entrance into the mind. Did any creatures then possess the requisite qualifications for predetermining the course, proper for the Most High to pursue in his government of the world, they would be creatures who had never sinned, actuated, to the utmost extent of their natural faculties, by a holy rectitude of disposition, or impartial, disinterested goodness. *We* surely are not the beings, fit for so high and solemn an undertaking.

4. The *actual state of things* is such, as to confound the arrogance, which would instruct and guide infinite wisdom. The creation, in many respects, is by no means what might naturally have been anticipated, under the reign of an infinitely great and perfect Being. While we find ample evidence of the reality of his infinite perfections, their mode of exhibition is such as to baffle all our forecast, and the conjectures of our prejudiced minds. "Clouds and darkness are round about him."

The existence of evil itself is a profound mystery. There was none originally ; nothing existed, save that God, who is the independent Author of all other being. We should have looked only for beauty, harmony, and perfect righteousness, under his government. We surely should not have expected either sin, or positive suffering. But what is the fact ? One entire race, at least, has become morally corrupt, and apostate from God. We see it, we feel it, we cannot call it in question. Sickness, pains, death, calamities more than we can enumerate, have scourged the earth, through all its generations. Where are the cheeks, which have not been bedewed with tears ? Where the bosoms, which have not been swollen with sorrow ? Where is the neighborhood, in which the ear is not tortured by the lamentations of widowhood, and the cries of helpless orphanage ? Where is the sweet without its bitter ; the rose without its thorn ? Whither but to solitude shall we flee, to escape the echo of groans, extorted by oppression ? How few of mankind have ever tasted the sweets of rational liberty, or enjoyed the blessings of a government, extending equal protection to all ? What debasing ignorance, with its concomitant superstitions and miseries, has marked the history of the larger portion of the human family, in all ages ? Almost everywhere the cunning and the selfish circumvent the confiding ; and the mighty trample on the weak. The injustice of man to his fellow man, and his practical aversion to the pure principles of goodness, are none the less real, because they have so often been made the themes of vehement and indignant declamation.

Here permit me to introduce the words of a writer of our own,
the late Dr. Channing,

“Think, thoughtless world,
How many fatherless and widows pine
In want; how many shiver in the storm.
Over a dying flame, how many cower
In some poor hovel, pressing to their breasts
Their little ones, to save them from the cold.
Oh think, what aching hearts ye might relieve!
What brooding sorrows ye might cheer! What tears
Of friendless, naked, moaning poverty
Ye might wipe off with lenient sympathy.

MAN,
My kin, lies desolate. A wintry blast
Has chilled his heart, frozen the circling blood
Of sympathy, and blighted the sweet fruits
Of love. How bleak and waste! in vain the Sun
Of Righteousness sheds bright and healing beams.
In vain does HE, who died on Calvary,
Extend his hands, bleeding with wounds of love.
MAN still is cold and wintry; still is hard,
And melts not into mercy. This vain world
Is colder than the northern skies.”

The poetry here is good; but its great charm lies in its
fidelity and exquisite tenderness.

None of the evils deplored by this writer would exist,
but for the purpose and permission of God. This con-
clusion must be admitted by all, who do not deny his
very being, as an intelligent first Cause; or who do not
resort, like the ancient Persians and Manicheans, to the hy-
pothesis of some independent and eternal principle, which is
above his control. Allow the *Divine Unity*, in the strict and
proper sense of that phrase, and all the difficulties to which I
have referred, in despite of our philosophy and our feelings,
cluster around us, in a formidable array, which our reason can
neither overcome, nor penetrate. He who fancies that he sees
all things plainly here, must be at best a superficial thinker.
Different monotheists have their different modes of explanation
— their dogmas, their theories — but the truth still remains,

wrapped in inexplicable folds of mystery. Whether Sensuous or Transcendental, whether Pelagian, Arminian, Calvinistic, or Hopkinsian, we are forced to the admission, however we may object to the terms, or affect to conceal our ignorance by profound taciturnity, that God, all things considered, preferred the present system, with all its inequalities and disorders, to any other, which his wisdom and benevolence could devise. He seeing the end from the beginning, and almighty to manage the universe according to the counsel of his own will, perceived that in some way, each coming event would contribute to the accomplishment of results, perfectly gratifying to his benevolent heart. Hence each event ever to take place was virtually predetermined by his wisdom. It is thus, and not by undertaking to explore the depths of his counsels, that we are enabled to rest satisfied in the belief, that he is neither deficient in goodness, nor the victim of a heartless blind necessity. But where are we now? How boundless, how awful are the wonders, by which we are encircled, overpowered!

Besides what is positively evil, we observe much, the *utility* of which we cannot understand. Why, for example, are there so many barren places? Why is so large a portion of the earth uninhabitable? Why have so many ages passed, without a fuller development of the Divine plan? These, and hundreds of other similar questions, which a *child* might ask, no sage, however skilful and far-reaching, would be able to answer. Facts then, broad, undeniable, meeting us every where, demonstrate the folly and wickedness of any attempts by men to point out the course, demanded by the perfections of God, and the interests of His wide kingdom. The prattling infant is certainly *as well* qualified to advise the philosopher, as the philosopher to advise the infinite God.

5. The *absurd conclusions* to which men have come, by a rash prejudgment of the acts of the Deity, should serve as a sufficient warning against such presumption. It has been assumed, that any conduct, incompatible with our views of wisdom and rectitude in creatures, is impossible to the Most High;

and hence His perceived acts have been alledged as an argument against his very being, or the perfection of His moral character, or his ability to rule the world according to his pleasure. From this source, speculative atheism, the disbelief of a particular Providence, and the oriental philosophy concerning the eternity of evil, have had their origin. The fact of God's supremacy, and his power of determining and controlling the volitions of his creatures, has been joined with the impious assumption, that virtuous deeds are no more pleasing to him than vicious ones, and consequently that, in his account, and therefore in reality, there is no essential difference between right and wrong, between sin and holiness. Others, unwilling to deny this difference, and yet disposed to bring down the divine government to their own comprehension, have set limits to his power; alleging the assumed independence and almightiness of the human will as his *excuse* for the introduction, and extensive reign of moral evil in the world. But the question forces itself upon us, Who made the human will, and why did he make it? Allow God to be its author, and the difficulty comes back upon the objector with all its force. The assumption that God is not its author, renders unnecessary the being of a God in order to account for the effects, by which this class of reasoners are perplexed and disturbed. That which is independent now, *might*, and I add, *must* have been so always; and, therefore, is self-existent. A *self-existent* faculty in a *dependent creature*? It cannot be. The hypothesis in question, therefore, takes away all the evidences, arising from the connexion of effects with their causes, of the existence of a supreme and universal Ruler. If some events may be attributed to casuality, or fate; why not all? If my will can move without God, why might it not have sprung into existence without him? Why, for the same reason, might not I, and the world too, exist without Him? Why should we believe in the being of God at all, when there are no actual phenomena to demand, or even to justify such a belief? Besides, a limitation of God's power, with respect to the management of his own creatures, is as truly an undeification of

Him, as the denial to Him of eternity, omniscience, or any other attribute, essential to the absolute perfection of his nature.

The scriptures have been assailed, and many of their recorded facts denied, as contrary to what had been conceived proper and consistent for God to do, or permit. The screw of a false exegesis has been applied to extort from the Bible utterances, accordant with the wishes of the critic; and often, for the very purpose of convicting it of such self-contradiction, as renders it an unfit guide of our faith. Every species of irreligious extravagance, every crudity of a spurious philosophy, every form of dreaming and demoralizing fanaticism, like fetid mists from a pool, have sprung from the notion, that the divine conduct, in its details, and in its general character, is to be measured by standards of human production. See, by a few examples, whither the principle would lead. As we have not the right, except in rare cases, to destroy human life, so it may be inferred that the great Author of life has not;—as it would be cruel in us, had we the power, to send poverty, and misery, and fatal diseases, upon little children, so, for the same reason, it must be cruel in God;—as it would be monstrous wickedness in us to overthrow cities, and depopulate empires, so the Most High cannot achieve such a mighty ruin, without the forfeiture of his character, as righteous and benevolent. He cannot, therefore, make use of famines, pestilences, earthquakes, volcanic fires, or any of the laws of nature which he has ordained, for so dreadful a purpose. If He be a good Being then, the calamities which befall mankind, must take place without his design, and even in opposition to his will. Thus the omnipotent and all-wise God is driven, a wretched exile, from his own dominions; or rather, is reduced to a metaphysical abstraction, a real non-entity. Polytheism too, in its grossest forms, is the legitimate offspring of the error now in question. A notion, so fruitful of all corruption in speculation and morals, bears upon the very face of it, the indubitable evidence of its falsehood.

6. The *benevolence* of God necessarily embraces *general in-*

terests, which are too wide and diversified for our comprehension. It will not do to say, that, as the nature of true goodness is the same in all beings, that precise conduct which would be wrong in us, must, for the like reason, be wrong in our Creator. The general statement is correct; but the inference from it is false. Genuine goodness is regulated in its operations, by the relations and circumstances of those whom it actuates. The parental relation, for example, demands different acts from the filial. Goodness in a magistrate will dispose him, in the maintenance and execution of law, to a course, which would not be consistent with goodness, or justice, in a private individual. Goodness in a government may demand the building of navies, the establishment of military posts, the raising and support of armies, and the infliction of summary punishment, and even death, on rebels and murderers. Such measures, were they possible, would be unjustifiable in those, not clothed with the powers of magistracy. On the same principle, goodness in God will dispose Him to adopt godlike measures, for securing the general welfare. To speak, reverently, he cannot do anything, which would be incompatible with His essential majesty, authority and glory; nor can he omit any acts, which are indispensable to the brightest manifestations of his perfections. It would be in us the height of arrogance, to think of imitating him in those respects, in which his Divinity peculiarly appears. His wisdom decides what belongs to him; and also the definite modes of agency, by which creatures can best express their benevolence. Their duty is declared in his *law*; and true goodness will induce them, in all instances, to make it the rule of their conduct. It does not therefore follow, that He, as a good Being, is bound to precisely the same *outward* acts, with his dependent and accountable creatures. He has a right to take away the lives of our children. Have we therefore, reason to infer, that we may lawfully do the same? He forbids private revenge in us; yet he says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay;" and he appoints the magistrate to be the executioner of his wrath. The general principle for which we contend, is there-

fore, clear. God demands of us the same disposition which he possesses, regulated in its actings, by the peculiarity of our circumstances and relations. *He* does that which is becoming in him as God; and *we* are bound to do what is becoming in us, as the subjects of his moral government. Viewing all things as they are, *He* determines and acts accordingly. If he have no rights peculiar to himself, then, of course, he cannot, without injustice, or doing evil that good may come, establish a system, which will secure the highest well-being of his intelligent kingdom. How meagre then must be his sources of enjoyment, as the universal Agent! And how doleful must be the prospects of the universe! But if the general good is the object of his whole administration, then, of course, we must be as wise as *He*, before we can infallibly predict the methods, by which he will accomplish his purposes.

7. The Bible requires us to exercise adoring submission, in view of those divine purposes and dispensations, the *reasons* of which we cannot perceive. To impress our obligation in this respect appears to have been one leading design of the book of Job. "Be still, and know that I am God," says Jehovah by the Psalmist; "I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth." "Trust in the Lord, with all thine heart," says Solomon, "and lean not unto thine own understanding." "Be not wise in thine own eyes." "Let no man deceive himself," says Paul. "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." When objectors cavilled against the divine sovereignty, the apostolic mode of refutation was this, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

It appears then, that reason and scripture concur in exposing the falsity and absurdity of the notion, that we are capable of

predetermining the course, proper for a Being of infinite wisdom to pursue. The infinitude of God's attributes—the greatness and variety of his works—the endless duration of his empire—the natural influence of depravity in blinding our minds—the state of things, which actually exists, under his government—the preposterous deductions, to which multitudes have been led by too much reliance on their own speculations—his peculiar prerogatives, as the supreme, benevolent Ruler of the world—and the earnest inculcations of the Bible—all point to the same conclusion on the subject.

The importance of this inference, in a practical view, is very manifest; and for the illustration and enforcement of its practical bearings, in several respects, I intend to occupy the remainder of this discourse.

1. The subject furnishes a sufficient refutation of many of the most popular objections against the doctrines of natural and revealed religion. Sheer ignorance, joined with a proud heart, is the parent of not a little of the confidence, which undertakes to argue against the principles of a cautious and sound theology. The topic might be illustrated by examples, to an almost indefinite extent. In all our religious inquiries, the only question to be settled, is, that of *fact*—of *evidence*;—and this being once ascertained, all arguments against it, resulting from the incomprehensibleness, or unexpectedness, of the conclusions to which it brings us, are inadmissible and worthless; to be reckoned in the same category, with the cavils of a savage, or a child, against the Copernican system, or any of the discoveries of natural science. As the sage can see what the unlettered son of the forest cannot, so the Most High may discern and know what is strange and unaccountable to the sage. Before the throne of the eternal Majesty, even the mightiest angels reverently veil their faces, as conscious of their incompetency to scan the thoughts and ways of the Holy One of Israel. Yet among men, numerous individuals can be found, who are far more adventurous and confident of their powers of investigation.

One objects to the doctrine of a literal creation as an impossibility ; hence he denies the existence of an independent personal God ; and affirms all the different forms of being to be but so many necessary developments of a single eternal essence. Thus, overlooking the numberless evidences of wise design in the universe, he settles down upon the gloomy dogma, that there is no intelligent and Almighty Parent, whom we may love, trust and adore. To one so strangely bewildered, I may say, how do you account for all the marks, which are every where observable, of supreme wisdom and goodness ? You virtually set aside the decisions of common sense, concerning the connexion between cause and effect, and involve yourself in the profoundest mysticism, ever dreamed of by the wildest Pagan. And what speculative advantage do you gain, by the paradox you assume ? Do you make things plainer ? Tell me, if you can, how that which is blind, dumb, dead, can possess the powers which you ascribe to it. What is God ? what is nature ? what is the universe ? Is it more difficult to conceive of creation, than of the theory which you profess to hold ? All things point to a Supreme Intelligence, the Author and Arbiter of the universe. Because the mode of the infinite Spirit's action is above you, will you contradict the testimony of countless myriads of voices, which, through all the realms of matter and of mind, declare his being, and thunder forth his praise ?

Another objects to the plenary inspiration of the Bible, as being, in some of its parts, unworthy of so great and good a Being as God. To such an one I may say, in the first place, that others, and men of sound sense and learning too, have thought differently ; and, in the second place, that the scriptures themselves, in numerous instances, assert their infallibility, and the supernatural guidance of their writers. I have not time to enter into an argument here ;—I would merely ask, in view of this subject, how do you *know* what revelation it becomes the unsearchable God to make to his creatures ? If you can judge for him, then surely you need no supernatural reve-

lation. Whatever Socrates might have thought or suggested, concerning the imperfection of *his views*, the *light within you* is sufficient.

One decides against the Trinity, the hypostatical union of two natures in Christ, and all the other theological opinions, which are involved in a belief of these doctrines,—as self-contradictory, absurd and impossible. I enter into no discussion. Criticism has exhausted itself on these topics. I have but a few words to say to such an objector. You must be sensible, that many of the most grave and learned men of almost every denomination of Christians, for at least seventeen centuries, have differed from you on these subjects. Did they all believe in contradictions? Perhaps they did. Well then, allow me to ask, how do *you know*, that the doctrines which you oppose, cannot be proved to be true? How do you *know*, that there is no peculiarity in the *mode*, as there must of necessity be, in the *foundation* of the Divine existence? How can you *prove*, that, in the infinitely perfect One, there is not *something*, implying no division in his substance, which is analagous to a *social nature* in us, and by which his blessedness is secured in the highest possible degree? However you may contemptuously smile at the idea, and more than intimate that it is demonstrably false, how do you *know* that Jehovah may not be *one* in one sense, and in another and very different sense, *three*? Are you sufficiently acquainted with God's nature, and with the nature of personal identity itself, to decide peremptorily in the matter? As to the incarnation of Christ, *how* do you *know* that it exceeds the power or wisdom of God, or is contrary to his moral perfections? These are questions which you cannot settle, unless you are omniscient, or rely on the simple testimony of his own word, interpreted according to the ordinary laws of language in other cases.

One denies the native depravity of our species, as a reflection on the goodness, or uncontrollable dominion of God. Thus he at once closes the door against all argument on the subject. His intuitive perceptions of right and wrong, his exquisite moral

sensibilities, terminate the controversy. What shall I say to such an one? I would ask him a few plain questions. How does it happen, that the common opinion of Christians is utterly diverse from yours on this point? Will you pretend that their conscience is less enlightened and sensitive than yours? Why do so many texts of scripture seem to teach, without any qualifying explanations, the doctrine which you deny? How do you *know*, that God could not, consistently with His goodness, so connect the character of mankind with that of their first progenitor, that his fall should ensure their corruption and ruin? You admit that sooner or later, all men become sinners;—is there any more difficulty, as it respects the divine goodness, in supposing that they become so at the *beginning of their existence*, than *afterwards*, or, by virtue of their connexion with Adam, than on any other ground? If God may be wise and good, in permitting sin to exist at all, as you allow that he is; why may he not be wise and good in permitting it to exist in our fallen race, at the earliest period of their intellectual and moral being? Will you allege, that the fact of our free agency is inconsistent with such a supposition? *How* do you *know* this? Can you penetrate all the secrets of the infant mind, and trace all the operations of Providence in that wondrous microcosm? You have only to look for the evidence of facts; and these are not to be overthrown by any hypothesis, however ingenious, or with whatever confidence announced, concerning the infinite God, and his government.

It is a common objection to God's foreordination of all events, that it is inconsistent with the freedom of creatures, and with his sincerity as a Lawgiver. I say nothing here of the metaphysics of the subject—nothing of Locke, or of Edwards, of Reed, of Brown, or of Kant. The government of the Deity, on any theory is a great deep, which no finite lines can fathom. One fact, may seem to contradict another fact; but it is because their connexion is too attenuated, or too vast, for human comprehension. Every truth must stand on its own proper basis, whether we can or cannot see its coherency with

all other truths, pertaining to the same general subject. Some of the greatest of men have been at the same time among the most strenuous advocates of the doctrine of the Divine decrees, as commonly understood by Calvinists, and the most perfect obligation of creatures to obedience. Where does history furnish more venerable and illustrious names, than those of Augustin, Zuinglius, John Calvin, and John Owen? What think you of the men, who composed the Synod of Dort, or the Assembly of divines at Westminster? Were Jonathan Edwards, the father and the son, to say nothing of Hopkins, West, Smalley and Emmons, men of small intellectual dimensions? If there is an absolute incompatibility between God's efficient purpose and human responsibility, is it not strange, that none of the great lights of the Calvinistic school and Puritanism, I might add, none of the Jansenists of the Romish communion, were ever aware of the fact? Omitting, however, all reference to names, I would ask the objector, how do you *know*, that there is such an incompatibility as you affirm to exist? *How* do you *know*, that God cannot have a perfect plan, embracing all details, and all results, without any infringement of that moral agency in us, which he employs for their accomplishment? *Know* you *not* that He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working; that all His doings are Godlike; that His thoughts and ways are above ours, as the heavens are above the earth?

It has often been said of the doctrine of the atonement, as stated in our creeds and catechisms, that it exhibits God in an unamiable light, rigorous in the exaction of punishment, without any regard to mercy, or even to justice. That this is an utter misstatement might easily be shown. Protracted discussion, however, is unnecessary. I would ask the antagonist of the atonement, how he *knows* that there may not be public reasons for the appointment of Christ as a Substitute, in order to the forgiveness of sin? How does he *know* that any other method of justification would not be dishonorable to God, and subversive of the fundamental principles of righteousness?

What if there be a public execution, "a central gallows," to which all eyes are directed? How does he *know* that the sight and remembrance of the tragedy on Calvary, will not be of everlasting benefit to the universe? Is it unusual in God to make the sufferings of one man, and he perhaps a man of distinguished virtue, redound to the advantage of others? Is the objector wise enough to determine what God ought and ought not to do, for the purpose of supporting His law, maintaining order, and securing the greatest amount of happiness in His mighty empire?

The most frequent objection to the eternity of future punishment has been its alleged incompatibleness with the perfections of God. But are we able to measure the exact demerits of sin? Do we, can we understand all its relations and tendencies? I appeal to judgment, and not to mere feeling, quickened by the apprehension of personal danger. Are we *quite sure* that the endless misery of a portion of guilty creatures will not in some way promote the virtue, and consequent happiness of the creation at large? If God may be wise and good, though limited evil exist, how do we *know* that he cannot be, though, in some instances, evil should be eternal, under his government? Besides; how do we *know*, that sinners who perish, will ever repent and reform? and if they do not, how can they ever be happy? The only important question here is, what does God himself teach upon the subject? for HE undoubtedly knows what sin deserves, and the conduct most becoming in him, towards incorrigible offenders. What does Jesus Christ mean by the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, the sin that can never be forgiven, and the assurance that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment? These are questions of the greatest personal interest to every individual of the human race. Of what practical moment is it, that we should be able to reconcile God's conduct with our own narrow and prejudiced conceptions of himself, and his moral attributes? What does he say?

2. We may learn from the subject, the spirit with which we

should apply ourselves to the study of religion in general, and of the Scriptures in particular. We are not to suppose, that nothing can be known with certainty, respecting God and His word. Skepticism is the darkness of folly,—not the light of a superior understanding. Nature is replete with signals of the Divine presence, wisdom, and benevolent agency. Our very frame, and, above all, our intellectual and moral faculties, with all their wondrous adaptations, are constant witnesses for the God who made us. The attestations to the Divine origin of the Scriptures, moreover, are such as cannot be questioned, without a virtual rejection of all the established laws of evidence.

Yet to engage in religious inquiries, with a predetermination to find results agreeable to our wishes, is but mere trifling on the most awful of all subjects. The false in morals is as likely as the true, to suit the desires of a wicked and deceitful heart. We ought, moreover, to be prepared to meet with wonders, unexpected and profound, in a volume emanating from the wisdom of the incomprehensible God. He can indeed teach nothing, which is actually absurd and impossible ; yet our pride, or ignorance, or selfishness, may affix those epithets to what is in reality most consonant with reason ; and known to be so, by beings of superior virtue and intelligence. That aversion to truth, which is the offspring of a depraved heart, may be very readily mistaken for the honest repulsion of a moral instinct to what is base or unjust. We make nugatory all the advantages of miraculous instruction, if, assuming that God can teach nothing inconsistent with our favorite views of himself and of religion, we adhere tenaciously to our own foregone conclusions, in the very face of his declarations to the contrary. We place His word, as the rule of faith, on a level with the Shasters, the Koran, and the traditions and decrees of the church of Rome. We make ourselves the infallible judges, and God's authority nothing worth. If we need not His teaching, why should He teach us? *Docility* is the first prerequisite in all *Divine*, as in all *human* sciences. The Bible is the Divine storehouse of facts and principles concerning God. It is the crucible for deter-

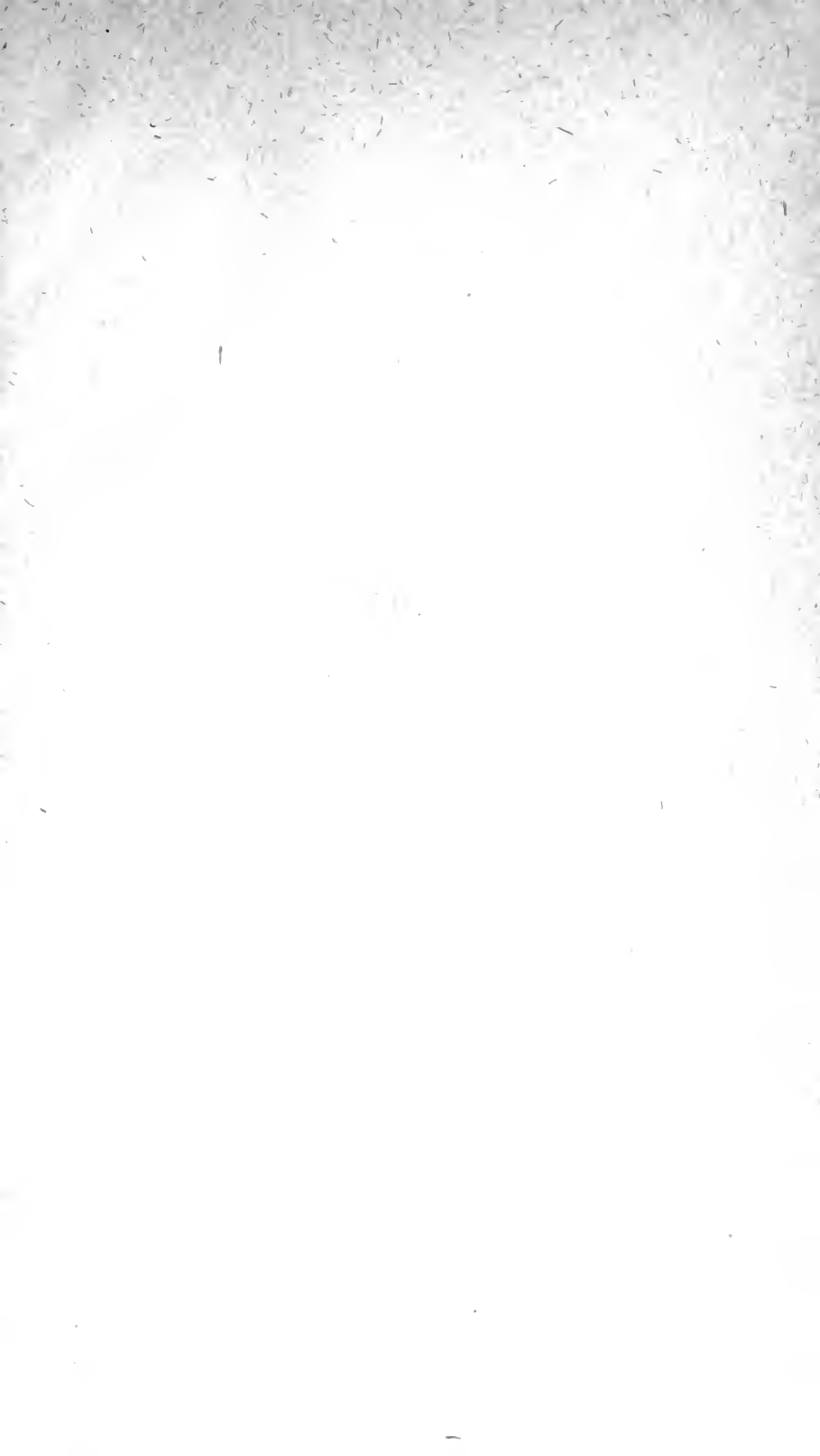
mining the value of all speculations, of all pretended discoveries, in religion. Having ascertained by examination, the supernatural origin and authority of the Scriptures, we are simply and devoutly to inquire what they mean, and abide by the result. How preposterous to oppose our own weak and prejudiced reason, to the infinite reason of God! The mole closing his eyes against the light of the sun, and then declaring that the luminary of day is but a taper, or a glow-worm!

3. The subject urges upon ministers the duty and encouragement to faithfulness, in the maintenance and publication of whatever truths God has revealed. He assures us that all Scripture is given by His inspiration; and requires us, in numerous forms of expression, to preach His gospel, in all its fulness and simplicity. It is all profitable, whether we can see it to be so, or not. As we are not able of ourselves to investigate the secret counsels of the Most High, so we are incompetent to decide what specific doctrines it is most desirable and necessary that mankind should hear, learn and believe. We may save ourselves the trouble of such an undertaking. God has determined the question for us. He has hung out His word from the heavens, as our signal and directory. It is as the pillar of cloud, and of fire for our guidance. It is a clear light to the feet, and a lamp to the paths, of wanderers, in this dark and perilous wilderness. It opens perceanial springs, where the weary and the fainting, amidst burning sands, and deadly winds, may satiate their thirst, and re-invigorate their exhausted frames. It rolls back the clouds, which had concealed the countenance of eternal mercy. It dissipates the gloom and terrors of the grave; and discovers to us bowers of unending felicity and glory on the other side of the flood. Wretched mariners, tossed, ready to be dashed to pieces, amidst the mad billows and storms of Ocean, here is our sheet-anchor. Here is the last hope of a guilty and ruined world. Dare we, can we then conceal the lamp of life, or seek to diminish its glory, or hold up any false lights in its stead? Better that we had never been born, than prove traitors in such a cause.

Wo, wo to us, my brethren, if we preach not the gospel.

Lastly, this subject enforces the duty and necessity of implicit confidence in God. We see through a glass darkly ; shadows flit around us ; we press after objects, which, like the images of a dream, elude our eager grasp. We come to what we had imagined to be the fountain of earthly bliss, and we find there utter dryness, or bitter and pestiferous waters. Pleasure is but the prelude to pain, and hope to disappointment. What shall we then do ? Shall we yield ourselves to despair ? However inexplicable events may appear, *still trust in God*. To this issue, the whole discussion leads us. Inscrutable as His perfections and many of His dealings are, He has furnished the most indubitable evidences of His being, and infinite righteousness and benevolence. His word and His Providence unite to vindicate His character, and constrain the holy creation to love and adore Him, amidst all the revolutions of His empire. The more His people learn of Him, the more sweet and entire is their trust in His wisdom, power and faithfulness. He is all in all. Each succeeding dispensation in his church has led to brighter discoveries of his glory ; and *thus* will everlasting progress be made in the knowledge and triumphs of His loyal subjects. From what we have known of the fulfilment of His promises, we doubt not but that all He has spoken, with respect to the future, will come to pass. He will keep in safety all His people, now struggling with temptation and sorrow. Their victory over death will come. They will behold the face of their enthroned Redeemer, and receive His benediction, amidst the shouts of the universe. The millennium so long foretold will come. The resurrection and the day of doom will come ; and exulting worlds will be gathered together, to celebrate the conquests of righteousness, and of invincible love. His punitive justice, no less than His mercy, will then be seen to be infinitely amiable. God will be the *rest*, the *joy*, of all holy minds forever. Let us, my dying hearers, begin that blessedness now. Build all your hopes on

the Rock of ages. There is sorrow, death, despair, every where else. Join, ye children of the Most High, in the praises of heaven. "And I heard as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."



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